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MIRANDY EXHORTS

DOROTHY DIX

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"I HAVE SEED DE BEARDED WOMAN AND DE LIVIN' SKELETON"

Mirandy Exhorts

By
DOROTHY DIX

Illustrated by
E. W. KEMBLE

THE PENN PUBLISHING
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Mirandy Exhorts

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Contents

Automobiles	9
The Discouragements of Philanthropy	17
The New Cure for Nerves	25
Mirandy on Widowers	33
Valentines	40
Post Mortems	51
Matrimony and Money	60
Babies	67
Lovers' Catechism	75
Old Wives for New	83
Men and the Domestic Art	92
Hypnotism of Love	102
The Happiness Cult	109
Eugenics	117
On Keeping Young	126
Long Engagements	135
The Amenities of Matrimony	143
Thanksgiving	151
Women	160
Romance	167

27 July 1923
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C O N T E N T S

ADVICE TO BRIDEGROOMS 177
TELLING YOUR TROUBLES 185
THE MONOTONY OF DOMESTICITY . . 193
KISSING 200
DIVORCE 208
MAKING THE BEST OF THINGS . . . 217
SILENCE 224
THE STUDY OF MANKIND 232
THE MOTHERS' UNION 240
HOW MEN PROPOSE 247
OUR NEIGHBORS 254
THE PRICE OF FREEDOM 261
ADVICE TO MOTHERS 269
THE BLESSINGS OF TROUBLE . . . 276
WIDOWS 284
KNOCKING YOUR IN-LAWS . . . 293

Illustrations

PAGE

"I Have Seed de Bearded Woman and de Livin' Skeleton" . . . *Frontispiece*

"She Still Wants de Arm of de Man She Loves Aroun' Her" 45

"Widout de Right to go Through His Clothes for Small Change" 138

"Cou'se no Woman 'Specs Much Manners From Her Husban'" 198

"He Picks Out de Fluffiest Bunch of Dry Goods He Can Find" 234

Mirandy Exhorts

AUTOMOBILES

PLEASUM, does you know whar a fust-class wash-lady, whut puts plenty of elbow grease into her wuk, can git anodder turn of washin' to do?

Nawm, my ole man Ike, he ain't got sick, nuther is done lost his job, but we done got a ortymobile, and when you gits a ortymobile you suttenly is got a call to git busy an' hustle out to suppo't hit.

Yassum, I specs de ortymobile is de mother of industry, lak de Good Book says, an' hit has done mo' to cure dat tired feelin' dat a lot of folks is bawn wid dan all de spring medicine on de 'pothecary's shelves, for whilst a

man might throw up his han's an' say dat he couldn't make enough money to take care of his wife an' chillun on, he will wuk his fingers to de bone to git de money to run his ortymobile.

An', my gracious goodness, de way a ortymobile eats up de spondulicks sholy am a scandal! Hit takes mo' to keep hit in shoes dan hit would forty-leven pairs of twinses, ef ev'y one of 'em had as many feet as a centipede.

Yassum, dat's so, caze I's been dere and I knows. We ain't got nothin' but one of dese heah Tin Lizzies, wid a bum lung, whut is tooken wid a shortness of breath when hit tries to climb a hill, but when I sees how much hit takes to run dat contraption I most gits run over in de street, tryin' to figger out how many billion dollars a yeah one of dem blue chariots costs whut de millionaires rolls aroun' in.

Cou'se I never did spec to set in a ortymobile myself. De closest acquaintance I ever expected to have pussonally wid ortymobiles was to dodge 'em, so I suttenly was taken on de onsurprise when Ike come home one day an' say dat he was a-thinkin' 'bout buyin' one.

AUTOMOBILES

"De lan' of Goshen," I 'sclaims, "but you suttenly must have lost yo' mind! You know we can't afford one!"

"Of cou'se we can't," 'spons Ike, "but bein' able to afford a ortymobile ain't got nuthin' to do wid havin' one, or odderwise de output of de ortymobile factories in de United States wouldn't be seven million, four hundred thousand machines a yeah. Dere's sca'cely anybody dat's got a ortymobile dat can affo'd hit. Dey tells me dat de reason dey makes 'em go so fast is so dey'll be des one lap ahead of de bill collector."

"But whar is you gwine to git de money to pay for hit?" I axes him, and den Ike, he say dat dis ortymobile he was gwine to buy was a second-han' one, and de man was gwine to sell hit to him on time, and den I give up de fight. For Ike, he's one of dese heah folks dat you could sell a fur overcoat to, to wear to a Fourth of July picnic, ef you'd sell hit on de installment—fo' dollars down, and fo' dollars to pay ev'y Saturday night de balance of yo' life.

But whilst I felt hit my duty as a good an' faithful wife to warn Ike against de folly of

buyin' dat ortymobile, I didn't put my foot down good an' flat, lak a woman does when she means business, and is gwine to make a rough house onless her husban' hearkens to her words of wisdom. In my secret soul, I was a-honin' after dat ortymobile, too, an' thinkin' how I'd fling de dust on dat uppity Mandy Jones when we drove a honkin' past her house, an' how I never would have to take a back seat agin and set lak I was dumb when Sis Araminty began a-braggin' 'bout dem two major operations she's done had and de time she stayed in de horspital, becaze I could des sorter casual bring in a few remarks 'bout my car, an' how many miles we made on de last run, an' odder topics lak dat, dat makes folks whut is got ortymobiles so interesting to deirselves.

Yassum, I reckons folks gits as much fun out of talkin' 'bout deir cars as dey does in ridin' in 'em, an' dat de princ'plest reasons dat ev'ybody tries to buy one, is just so dey won't have to listen to odder folkses tell 'bout how gran' an' wonderful deirs is. I suttenly is sorry in any company for dem people whut ain't got no chillun, and no ortymobile, and so

ain't got no way to git even wid de folks what has. Dey suttenly is po', pitiful, defenseless critters.

Hit's curious, dough, ain't hit, how different things looks when you is doin' 'em—or bein' done by 'em? Now befo' we got our ortymobile I used to think dat de cops ought to run in ev'ybody in a car dat was gwine mo' dan two miles an hour, and dat dey ought to make de cars stop whilst de folks zigzagged across de street in de middle of de block. An' I was all for lynchin' de ortymobilists whut knocked down a woman whut got off a street-car backwards, an' walked right into a machine dat was comin' her way whilst she said good-bye for de forty-eleventh time to some woman she was talking to.

But now, whilst I'm a sashayin' aroun' in a car myself, I wants to put on de speed and split de road open at fifty miles an hour, an' I thinks dat folks oughtn't to be allowed to walk on de street an' interfere wid de drivin', an' when I heahs dat a ortymobile is run over anybody, I says hit serves 'em right for not bein' quick enough to git out of de way.

Yassum, ortymobiles suttenly does have a

curious effect on yo' disposition. An' mo' specially on de disposition of men. Dere's somethin' in a ortymobile dat changes a man whut is as meek as a lamb at odder times an' places into a roarin' lion goin' 'bout seeking whom he may devour.

Now dere's Ike. When we's at home a-settin' aroun' our own stove in de winter, or on our own front porch in de summer, Ike, he's as mild a mannered man as you'd meet in a week of Sundays. An' whilst I ain't one to boast of henpeckin' my husban', I will say dat I sorter rules de roost in dem diggin's, an' dat he speaks to me polite, and don't dast make a sneak for de lodge ef so be I is got my eye on him. Yassum, he suttenly am a good housebroke husban' at home.

But des let us git out on de road in dat ortymobile, and let anything go wrong wid hit, an' him git out an' git to tinkerin' wid hits insides, an' hit's as much as yo' life is wuth even to ask him whut he thinks is de matter wid hit. De way he growls, an' swears, an' snaps, an' snarls at de wife of his bosom is enough to raise de goose-flesh on yo' bones.

An' as for talkin' to a man when he's put-

tin' a tire on a wheel, dere ain't no women dat's foolhardy enough to try dat but oncet. Dat's why you'll notice dat de ladies in de fambly is always gatherin' flowers by de wayside, or communin' wid nature in silence, whilst de man is lookin' lak bloody murder a-tuggin' at de wheel.

An' nuthermo' is hit safe for a woman whut ain't ambitious of figgerin' in a divorsch case, or as de corpse in a funeral, to pass out any remarks to her husban' 'bout de way he is drivin', or tell him which turn of de road to take.

He may be glad enough to have her spressify herself 'bout his business, and to have her pick out his clothes for him, an' he may lean so hard on her good horse sense dat he never makes a move widout her advice, but when he gits in a ortymobile all dat is changed, and hit's up to her to set still, an' sing low ef she wants to keep de peace.

Yassum, ortymobiles suttenly does have a gran' moral influence on wives, an' dey's raisin' up a lot of married women dat's gwine to make dat Patient Griselda, whut you was tellin' me 'bout, look lak a sassiety flapper.

Yassum, if you wants a picture of a meek wife wid a tongue between her teeth, who dasent speak ontel she's spoken to, des look at de lady in de back seat of de next ortymobile you passes. Dere ain' nothin' but knowin' dat she looks lak a million dollars dat pays her for all de things dat she's thinkin' and bottlin' up inside her.

And ortymobiles has a fine moral influence on men, too. Anyway, a man whut has to suppo't a ortymobile most ginerally ain't got no money to suppo't any odder vice. An', furdermo', his wife knows whar he is when she's wid him, and when he's drivin' he can't be cuttin' his eyes aroun' at yaller gals in high-water skirts, whut don' weigh mo' dan half of whut his wife does.

Yassum, a ortymobile suttenly is a gran' invention. De only objection I'se got to hit is dat I can't set on de fence and see myself ride by in mine.

THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PHILANTHROPY

"I 'SPECS dat de reason dat dere ain't no folks whut is good, an' kind, an' generous is becaze you can't be good, an' kind, an' generous oncet, an' den be done wid hit. Ef you start hit you've got to keep on bein' good, an' kind, an' generous until you is busted as flat as a pancake, an' wo' out to skin an' bones.

"Yassum, I don't know nothin' dat's mo' discouragin' dan hit is to be good to folks. Ef you knocks a pusson down an' tromps all over him, he lets you alone an' lets you live yo' life in peace an' comfort. But ef you tries to help a pusson up on his feet, he des hangs hisself aroun' yo' neck lak a millstone, an' you got to tote him along de balance of yo' days.

"Hit looks lak dat when you helps anybody oncet dat dey ought to be grateful enough to you to let you be, an' hold up somebody else de next time, but dey don't. Dey des feels lak dat you is deir meat dat a merciful Providence done pervide for deir suppo't, lak de Lawd done send dat manners in de wilderness for de chillun of Israel; an' so dey don't never let up on nibblin' on yo' pocketbook.

"Dat's whut makes folks sorter 'fraid to wipe de tears from de widow's eyes, an' turn a cold shoulder on deir po' relations. Dey would be glad enough to chip in oncet wid a few scads, or hand out a few meals ef dat would be de end of hit, but well dey knows dat hit won't.

"Dey's done been dar befo', an' dey knows by sperience dat ef you ever invites any of yo' po' kin to dinner dey'll des make a free hotel of you ever after, an' dat ef you pays de rent one month for a widow she'll des hand de job to you for keeps, an' think you is a mean, stingy ole thing becaze you don't board her at de Waldorf.

"Yassum, de Bible sholy is a mighty smart book, for don't hit tell you dat when you does

good not to let yo' right hand know what yo' left hand does? Dat's becaze ef you does you ain't never gwine to git yo' left hand out of yo' pocket. Ev'ybody you does a good turn to thinks dat one good turn deserves anodder, an' dat you's got to keep on repeatin' de performance, an' dey walks over you, an' gives you de laugh becaze you ain't got no mo' backbone dan to be a door-mat wid WELCOME printed on hit.

"Yassum, I knows whut I is talkin' about, for I's done been, an' gone, an' got my dose, an' de next time I does good to anybody I's gwine to put on a false face, an' gum shoes, an' wrap a sheet aroun' me, so dey can't tell who I is; an' I's gwine to slip aroun' an' do good in de middle of a dark night when dere ain't no moon, so dey can't locate me for a easy mark dat's got dis doin' good habit fastened on me.

"Wellum, hit sho' am a strange thing dat you inherits a case of affliction de ve'y minute you tries to relieve hit. You des wishes hit on yo'self, den an' dere, so you can't get rid of hit. Now dere's ole Sis Sabitha, whose husban' done run off wid a peart yaller gal,

leavin' her wid fo' small chillun, an' de rheumatiz, an' de misery in her back, mo' dan fifteen yeahs ago. Sis Sabitha suttenly was in a pitiful state, an' bein' as how I ain't one of dem folkses dat takes out deir sympathy in sheddin' a few tears in a clean pocket handkerchief, I des retched down de ole teapot from de shelf an' took out de money dat I was a-savin' up to buy me a new frock, an' paid Sis Sabitha's rent.

"Well, Sis Sabitha sholy did spressify herself as bein' grateful to me, but how did she prove hit? Did she say dat Sis Mirandy done done her part noble by me, an' now I'll git somebody else to pay de next month's rent?

"Nawm, dat she didn't. She says to herself dat Sis Mirandy will pay my rent ruther dan see me an' de chillun flung out in de street, an' so I'll des use de money dat I can git from odder folks in some odder way. An' dat's whut she done, an' from dat day to dis, I's been a-inchin', an' a-pinchin', an' a-schrinchin' to help along Sis Sabitha, who feels lak she's got a puffect right to dip into my puss becaze I was good to her in de fust place.

"An' dere's Tilly Ann. Tilly Ann is a young mother wid a whole litter of babies, an' I sholy did feel sorry for her bein' tied down to de house wid 'em. So I tell her dat some day when she's a-honin' to take a little walk an' refresh herself, to bring de twinses over to my house, an' I'd mind 'em for her for a hour or two.

"Tilly Ann, she say hit's mighty kind of me to offer to lend a hand in carin' for 'em, an' she sholy do appreciate hit. Wellum, how you think Tilly Ann show how thankful she is to me? By dumpin' dem twinses down on me ev'y day ontel you'd think dat I was runnin' a orphan asylum.

"Co'se I wouldn't mind takin' care of her brats oncet in a while, but ef I'd a knowed whut I was a-lettin myself into, I'd a kept si'ent, an' let her wrastle wid her own baby proposition.

"An' as for borryin', hit suttenly would be a privilege ef you could help a friend out oncet wid a few dollars when he was in hard luck, or ef you could now an' again let a sister in de chu'ch have de use of yo' cake-pan, or lend her yo' new cut paper pattern. But you don't

dast do hit becaze ef you starts to lend hit's a continuous performance.

"Me an' Ike, when we was married, we was all for holdin' out de helpin' hand to ev'ybody about us, an' de fust news we knowed, dough we was both a-wukin' an' a-savin', we was 'bout to have to pass aroun' de hat for ourselves. Hit got noised aroun' dat we was too kind-hearted to say 'no,' an' when we got through bein' good to odder folks, we didn't have nothin' to be good to ourselves on.

"Yassum, ef you lends a pusson a thing oncet dey shows deir gratitude by borryin' hit over again, an' 'bout de third time dey borries hit dey thinks hit belongs to 'em, an' dey don't bodder to return hit. Dat's why folks dat's got good, hard, horse-sense keeps deir money an' deir friends, too, by never lendin' anything in de fust place.

"An' hit's funny, too, dat you can't be good occasionally even to yo' husban' widout ruinin' him. Now me, I'd lak oncet in a while to turn my blind eye on Ike, an' let him sidestep a little, an' make out dat I was asleep when he came home late, an' I'd just love to tell him dat I think dat he's de finest man dat ever

come down de path, an' I mos' bustes wid pride dat he belongs to me.

"But I dasent. Ef I ever let up an' took to spreadin' de salve one time, I'd never git him back to walkin' de chalk line agin.

"Nawm, I reckon bein' good is 'bout de most discouragin' thing in de worl', becaze when you start hit you can't stop hit. Folks won't let you.

"Yassum, I got to be moseyin' along now. I got to stop by Sis Sabitha's wid a few dimes I got for her, an' dis new-fangled remedy for her rheumatiz, becaze de ole lady is mighty painified dis wet wedder, an' I sho is got her on my mind when hit rains. An' I specs by de time I gits home dat Tilly Ann will be over wid de twinses, which am de cutest little skeeziks dat you ever set yo' eyeballs on, an' dat sho is gwine to be tickled wid dese heah gumdrops I's a-takin' 'em, an' I bet Sis Hannah Jane will be a-waitin' to borry dis heah fine hat I got on, whut I promised her I'd lend her to wear to de meetin' of de Daughters of Zion.

"Yassum, hit's funny, ain't hit, how you gits to feel so close to de folks dat you is good to dat dey are sort o' lak yo' own fambly?

Dere's times you feel lak lambastin' 'em, but hit suttenly would hu't yo' feelings ef dey went to anybody else for help after you done done so much for 'em!"

THE NEW CURE FOR NERVES

AIN'T hit curis how des 'bout de time dat folks git rich enough to git a ortymobile dey lakwise gits nerves?

You don't never heah 'bout no po' folks havin' nerves. As long as you has to hustle, an' wuk, an' worry 'bout de price of po'k-chops an' whar de next meal is comin' from, hit seems lak you ain't got no organs but a stomach, but des de minnit you moves over on Easy Street an' is got money in de bank, you is tooken wid dis heah complaint dey calls de nervious prosperity.

Maybe nerves is de way de good Lawd pervides for de doctors, lak he work dat mericle about de fishes de Good Book tells 'bout. Or

maybe nerves is des a sign of bein' rich, lak diamonds is. I don't know. All I knows is dat de minnit folks can afford nerves dey has 'em, an' nothin' don't seem to be no cure for 'em but to lose deir money.

Anyway, dat's de only remedy I ever see wuk on a nervious lady's system, an' many is de one dat had de neurastheny, dat I is seed restored to health by havin' to git up an' tackle de wash-tub when her husban' died an' left her wid six babies an' twinses to suppo't.

But hit seems lak dere's an Eyetalian doctor, whut must be one of dem doctors whut thinks dat de wuss de dose is de better hit wuks, whut has done diskivered anodder remedy for nerves, an' dat is silence. Las' night Ma'y Jane was a-readin' 'bout hit to me an' her pa, an' dis doctor man says dat de reason dat women is so nervious is becaze dey talks too much, an' he promulgates de doctrine dat ef you don't want to be nervious, all you got to do is to shut up, an' go roun' lak you is got de lockjaw.

"How true dat is," sclaims Ma'y Jane, as she lays down de paper, "for de clams an' de eyesters, which is de silentest animals whut

dere is, ain't got no nervious system whutever!"

"Huh!" 'spons I. "Dat doctor must be one of dem men whut talks to heah his haid rattle. Anyway, I don't take no stock in whut he says, for I's been a-gabblin' away as hard as ever I could for mo' dan fifty yeahs, an' I ain't got a nerve concealed 'bout my pusson.

"Maybe hit makes a *man* nervious," says I, wid a meanin' glance at Ike, "to talk, an' mo' 'specially to talk to his wife an' make hisself agreeable tellin' de news he has heard, instid of sittin' up lak a sto' dummy wid a pipe in his mouth of a evenin'. Yassum, maybe hit's becaze dey's takin' care of deir delicate nervious systems dat makes husbands dat silent an' glum in de fambly circle dat ef a graven image was set up in place of one, his wife wouldn't never find out de difference so fur as conversation went. But when hit comes to women, talkin' don't aggrefret deir nerves. Hit rests 'em. Deir mouths is a safety valve through which dey lets off deir steam.

"Many is de time I's been dat het up dat I would have blowed up an' bu'sted, ef so be I had had to keep my feelin's bottled up in me

widout bein' able to spressify myself on dem p'ints which had raised my dander, but after I has said my say, I cools down an' is des as ca'm an' peaceable as a May mawnin'.

"Naw, sir, hit ain't talkin' dat makes a woman nervious. Hit's keepin' silent dat does. You watch out for dem grum women whut don't say nothin' but des sets up doin' a lot of thinkin'. Fust thing you knows, dey gits up an' starts a ruckus wid some lady wid a good figger, whut ain't mo' dan half as ole as dey is, or dey pisens deir husbands. But one of dese heah women whose tongue is got a perpetual motion action to hit, an' whut talks, an' talks, an' talks—shoo, a man can manage her wid one hand tied behin' him. She don't do nothin'. She jest fizzes out in words.

"Yas, sir, I sho is got my s'picions of a woman whut don't lak to talk. Dere's something onnatcheral 'bout her."

"I specs dere must be," says Ike, "but ef you is ever seed a woman wid yo' own eyes dat don't lak to talk, you sholy is out-traveled me. I ain't never had de pleasure of beholdin' one, yit I's been to circuses an' I has seed de

Bearded Woman, an' de Livin' Skeleton, an' de man whut writ wid his toes, an' de odder freaks, but dere warn't no Silent Woman amongst dem, dough I misdoubts dere wouldn't have been a married man, far or near, dat wouldn't have paid out good money for de pleasure of seein' her an' marvelin' dat such a strange critter could be. As for me, I don't believe dere is sich a animal.

"Howsomever, old lady," he goes on, "I don't think dat you gits de wharforeness an' de wharasness of dis heah Eyetalian doctor's meanin' when he says dat de great sovereign cure for nerviousness is for women to quit talkin'.

"He don't mean dat for women to shut up will cure de women demselves. He means dat hit will cure deir husbands. Dis ain't no female perscription. Hit's a remedy for men.

"An' right dar is whar I takes my stand wid dat doctor an' holds up his hands, as de hymn-book says. Yassum, dat's a great man wid a long haid, dat doctor is, an' he done put his finger right on de trouble an' 'splained why so many po', onfortunate men is nervious wrecks. Hit's becaze deir wives talks too

much an' too often, an' de onliest cure for dem men is for deir wives to cut out de chin music.

"Yassum," continues Ike wid a mournful air, "dere ain't nothin'—no risk, no danger, an' no nothin'—dat can make a man so nervious as his wife's tongue can. Hit des gives him de creeps an' sends little chills chasin' up an' down his backbone when he thinks 'bout hit.

"Yassum, dat's so, an' dat ain't all. When I is a-thinkin' 'bout steppin' roun' to de lodge to spend de evenin' wid some friends, an' jest as I reaches for my hat I catches yo' eye an' sees you sorter beginnin' to wind up yo' talkin' machine, hit makes me dat trembly wid nerviousness dat my legs gives way onder me, an' I jest sinks back into my chair, whar I sets fast till bedtime. 'Tain't dat I is afraid of you, for I'd scorn to be one of dem po', henpecked men whut don't dast peep befo' deir wives. Hit's des dat your talkin' makes me nervious.

"An' I ain't de only man dat's tremblin' on de verge of bein' a nervious wreck on account of his wife's talkin'. You jest watch any man

you lak, an' ev'y time he heahs his wife's voice he jumps.

"Oh," says Ike in a sad voice, "whut a mournful thing hit is to see all de po', mis'-able, nervious men 'bout us, an' to think dat we could all be cured by de silence treatment, ef only our wives would hold deir tongues."

"What would you do ef I should quit talkin'?" I axes Ike.

"I should send for de ondertaker," he 'spons, "for I'd know dat you was stone dead."

"Don't worry," says I, "for I ain't gwine to try dat silence cure. An' anyway, dere ain't no use in nobody pesterin' deir minds 'bout tryin' to find out a remedy for nerves, for nerves ain't no disease. Dey's a graft. Dey's de best excuse, goin' an' comin', dat anybody has ever invented for doin' dem things whut dey wants to do, an' leavin' undone dem things whut dey don't want to do.

"Ef you's got nerves, you can sass people all you lak to an' dey's got to pity you instid of swattin' you over de haid for whut you say to 'em. Ef you's got nerves, you is well enough to go to de movies, an' shoppin', an' on

'scursions, but you's too sick to wash de dishes or git dinner. Yassum, hit sho is a cinch to have nerves.

"An' women is done found dat out, an' dat's de reason dat dem whut has got 'em hangs on to 'em. An' no doctor ain't never gwine to cure 'em, nuther. 'Specially by wukin' any silence racket on 'em."

MIRANDY ON WIDOWERS

"De reason dat I is lookin' so grand, all dolled up in my new high-water skirt an' white shoes, is becaze I's just been to de weddin' of Maud Gladys Jones an' Br'er Simon Johnsing. Yassum, hit sholy was a scrumptious 'casion, wid de mourners' bench all roped off wid white ribbons for de bridegroom's fambly, an' de hallelujah corner set aside for de bride's folks, jest lak dey always does hit at white folks' weddings.

"An' whilst we waited for de bridal couple, Elviry Hopkins pawed de ivory off de keys of de melodjum a-playin' 'De Voice dat Breathed o'er Eden,' an' de congregation passed remarks betwixt deirselves a-speculatin' on how Maud Gladys's pa was gwine to

git de money to pay for all dese heah doin's, an' wonderin' whut made her want to tie up wid Br'er Simon, anyway.

"Becaze Maud Gladys is a mighty pert, spry young gal dat de men has des been a-swarmin' aroun' like bees aroun' a honey-pot, an' hit sholy did look lak she done gone through de woods an' picked up de crooked stick at de end when she segasuated up de chu'ch-aisle wid Br'er Simon, whut is bald-haided, an' bowled-legged, an' runty, an' measly-lookin', an' ain't got no worldly goods to endow a wife wid except a ready-made fambly.

"'Cou'se nobody can tell whar yo' love is gwine to fall,' says Sis Tempy to me wid a sniff behind her hymn-book, 'but hit looks mighty funny to me dat Maud Gladys's ch'ice should have been Br'er Simon, whut is mighty nigh ole enough to be her pa, instid of one of dem fine upstanding young bucks dat's been a-hangin' aroun' her.'

"'Hit's becaze he's a widower,' 'spons Sis Peruna. 'Dey tells me dat widowers totes a conjure bag an' a rabbit's foot, an' dat when one makes a pass at a gal dat she's jest got to git up an' follow him.'

"'Dat's de true word,' says Sis Tempy in a hollow voice. 'I done seed hit myself. I done seed gals done give de go by to all de fine-lookin' young men in de neighborhood an' den cast in deir lot wid de fust po', onery-lookin' widower wid a houseful of chillun dat come deir way. Yassum, all dat a widower has got to do is des to take his pick of de women.'

"'Dat's so,' 'spons Sis Peruna, 'dat's de reason dat dere ain't no word of comfort in de Scriptures for widowers lak dere is for widows. De good Gawd knowed dat dere warn't no call for 'em, 'caze a widower can comfort hisself any day dat he has a mind to.'

"'Widowers sho' is de boss marriers,' put in Sis Hannah Jane, 'de highfalutin' gals an' de rich widows is des marked for 'em. A woman will marry de kind of a man ef he's a widower dat she wouldn't look at ef he was a ole bachelor.'

"'Hit's de conjure,' says Sis Peruna wid a groan.

"But I knows dat hit's becaze ev'y now an' den dere's a woman whut knows a good thing

when she sees hit, an' dat's de reason dat she ties up wid a widower whut some odder woman is done wuked herself to death breakin' into matermony. For, you see, a man is lak a horse—he des natcherally shies at de halter, an' you have to gentle him an' conquer him befo' you can git him bridal-wise. Dat's whut makes marryin' a man whut ain't never been married befo', an' marryin' a widower, de difference betwixt hitchin' yo'self 'longside of a fractious, balky, kickin' colt, an' a good, quiet ole horse dat is broke to double harness, an' dat is used to pullin' mo' dan half of de load.

"One of 'em is full of thrills an' trouble, an' de odder is full of rest an' peace, an' havin' yo' own way, an' dat is why ev'y woman dat has cut her wisdom-teeth jumps down a widower's throat de minnit he opens his mouth to ax her to be No. 2.

"I disremembers ef I ever heard of a widower landin' in a divorsch co't. Hit's always de fust wife dat has to ax for alermony. De second wife gits all de money widout axin' for hit. You see, when a man marries de fust time, he thinks dat a woman is a angel widout

no nerves nor temper, an' dat she don't need no money for clothes, becaze shirt-waists grows on her back lak de pin-feathers in a sheriff's wings, an' dat all de fun she wants is to spend her time cookin' him up something good to eat, an' waitin' at de do' to welcome him home wid a glad sweet smile.

"Dat's de flatform dat a man marries on, an' by de time dat he gits off of hit, he an' his wife have fit over ev'y inch of hit, an' de po' woman is dat wore out dat she turns up her toes an' dies.

"An' dar is whar de smart woman steps into her shoes. De man is sorter had his sperit broke, too, by de warfare, an' he's humble an' meek, an' don't know near so much 'bout how to manage a wife as he did when he got married de fust time. But de main pint is dat he knows women. He knows dat a woman can't keep house, an' feed de fambly, an' buy clothes widout money, an' you don't heah no widower husband a-axin' his second wife whut she did wid dat quarter dat he give her week befo' last.

"An' de widower knows dat when a woman gits out of bed in de mornin' on de wrong

foot, wid her jaw grumblin' wid de neuralgy, an' de misery in her back, an' she kicks de cat, an' slaps de baby befo' breakfast, dat hit ain't no time to pint her to de joys of religion, nor make remarks 'bout folks's temper. Hit's a time for a man to sneak, an' he beats hit, an' dat's de reason dat folks always says how much better a man treats de second wife dan he did his fust.

"An' de widower has done learnt by 'sperience how to soft-soap a woman, an' how to git 'roun' her angles, an' dodge de corners of her temper, an' not answer back when he sees dat she is got hay on her horns, an' dat's why things gits along wid dem lak dey was runnin' on greased skids.

"Nawm, he's done been dere, an' dat's de reason dat you don't heah of no No. 2 wife havin' to set up of a night waitin' for her husban' wid a flat-iron in her hand an' all de things whut she lays out to say to him jes' a-bubblin' an' a-sizzlin' in her mind.

"Dat's how widowers can marry any woman dey want, whedder dey is ugly an' po', or not. Dey's whut dese heah insurance folks calls de preferred risk in matermony. Cou'se

dere's some gals dat is huntin' for trouble, an' dey picks out de young men, but de smart women takes de widower whut anodder woman is done killed herself educatin' so dat he'll stand widout bein' tied.

"My lan', when I thinks 'bout whut a gran' catch my ole man Ike would be for some gal after all de trainin' I's done give him, an' how well he could marry agin ef he was a widower, I feels dat hit's as mean as a dog for me to keep on livin'."

VALENTINES

DID you ever notice how a romantical disposition always seems to go wid fat, mo' specially in women? 'Bout de time a woman quits lookin' lak a lady-love an' begins to look lak a feather bed, she begins to hone an' pine for soft talk, an' for somebody to hold her hand an' tell her dat she suttenly does put 'em in mind of de Queen of Sheba.

Yassum, hit's de hefty sisters, wid three chins, dat trimbles wid emotion, dat's full of feelin' an' des sloshin' over wid sentiment. Dese heah livin'-skeleton women ain't got no heart. Dey is all bone.

Whut makes me say dis is dat yesterday I had a visit from Sis Vaseline, an' she suttenly

was low-down in her mind, an' as she set an' rocked, ev'y now an' den she fetched a groan from de pit of her stomach, dat sholy did make hit a mournful occasion. I tried to cheer her up by bilin' her a cup of tea an' axin' her whut ailed her, becaze ef you wants to give a woman a real party, all you got to do is des to let her tell you her troubles widout you relatin' none of yo' grievances to her.

"Sis Vaseline, ma'am," says I to her, "I gathers from yo' looks an' conversation dat de hand of de Lawd is done laid heavy on you."

At dese words Sis Vaseline, whut is a pussonable lady lak I is, whut tilts de scales roun' de two-hundred-pound mark, commences to shake an' quiver lak a mountain of jelly, an' den she bu'sts into tears an' sobs into de corner of her apron.

"Oh, Sis Mirandy," she 'spons in sorrowful tones, "I's a broken-hearted woman, an' ef hit warn't dat I's a member of de Daughters of Zion, in good an' reg'lar standin', an' ef you warn't so mussy after you has been run over by de street-car or fished out of de river, which is a orful damp way to die, Sis Mirandy, an'

suttenly does leave a corpse lookin' in no way to be a pride to de fambly, I'd go right out dis minnit an' commit susancide."

"Shoo, Sis Vaseline," says I in a soothin' voice as I poured her out another cup of tea, "don't you take on lak dat, for whilst Heaven is our home, dere ain't no use in bein' in a hurry 'bout gittin' dere. You better stay on in a place whar you is acquainted an' acclamated. But whut's done drove you to thoughts of susancide?"

"Hit's becaze Lemuel don't love me no mo'," wailed Sis Vaseline.

Well, at dat I sorter brightens up lak we all does when we finds out dat our best friend has got a secret sorrow dat she's 'bout to promulgate to us 'bout. Den I remembered my manners, an' I drew down de corners of my mouth an' looked sympathetic, an' says:

"You po' lamb! An' after all you done done for dat man, too! Why, I bet you done washed a million shuts for him, an' patched a thousand pairs of britches, whilst as for yo' cookin', you has des got to pass yo' hand over de pot to make hit tasty. An' I must say dat yo' news takes me on de onsurprise, for

ef ever I see a man dat looked dat meek an' humble dat he dasen't say his soul was his own, hit is Br'er Lemuel."

"Hit's des lak you say, Sis Mirandy," 'spons Sis Vaseline, sniffin' in her apron some mo'. "I done done my duty noble by dat man an' kept him right onder my thumb endurin' all dese thuty yeahs dat we's done been married, an' dat's whut breaks my heart, to find out he don't love me no mo'."

"But how did you find hit out?" I axes. "Is you caught him chasin' after one of dem slim hussies in dem new-fangled, britches-legged skirts?"

"Nawm," 'spons Sis Vaseline, "so fur as I know, Lemuel ain't castin' no sheep's-eyes at no odder female, nuther is he spendin' his money on 'em, becaze I does a wife's part by countin' de money de minnit he gits home wid hit. But de reason dat I knows his love is dead is becaze he ain't gwine to send me no valentine lak my daughter's beau is gwine to send her."

"Ain't gwine to send you no valentine!" 'sclaims I. "Of course he ain't! Why, Sis Vaseline, I reckon any jury would convict a

married man of insanity an' send him to a padded cell, ef dey even s'picioned dat he sent a valentine to a ole fat wife dat he's been tied up wid for thuty yeahs."

"Bein' ole, an' fat, an' married for thuty yeahs don't keep a woman from a-hungerin' an' a-thirstin' for love, an' wantin' to be treated ev'y now an' den lak a sweetheart instid of lak a kitchen range, an' a wash tub, an' a sewin'-machine," sobbed Sis Vaseline.

"I tell you, Sis Mirandy, dat if husbands would des keep deir kisses flavored up wid romance instid of havin' 'em taste of ham an' eggs, dat hit would do mo' to make dis worl' a millennium dan anything else."

"Dat's de Gord's truth dat you is spoke," says I, "but hit ain't never gwine to happen, becaze men an' women ain't built alike. De trouble wid us women is dat we stays brides ontel we's gray-haided, an' got de rheumatiz an' de misery in our j'ints, an' wears red flannel, whilst a man gits over bein' a bridegroom at de altar de minnit de preacher says, 'I pronounces you man an' wife, an' may de Lawd have mercy on yo' souls.'

"SHE STILL WANTS DE ARM OF DE MAN SHE LOVES AROUN' HER"

"An' no matter how many corns a woman gits on her hands wukin' for a man, she still pines to have him hold 'em, an' no matter how many inches aroun' de belt line she gits, she still wants de arm of de man she loves aroun' her, an' no matter how deef she gits, she wants to have him yell into her ears dat she's de yaller rose of Texas an' de onliest woman in de worl' to him.

"An' ef he will do dat, she'll wuk her fingers to de bone for him an' be glad of a chanst to do hit, an' he can beat her an' starve her, an' she'll still think that she drew de blue ribbon prize in de matermonial lottery. An' ef he don't do hit, she'll be miserable an' discontented, an' s'picion her husband's affection for her, no matter ef he is domestic as de house cat an' gives her ev'y cent of money dat he earns.

"But men—de po' simps!—don't never find dis out, or else dey's too all-fired lazy an' selfish to act on hit. So dey goes along spectin' us to take deir love for granted, an' know dat we's givin' saterfaction as wives as long as dey don't haul us up in de divorsch co't, whilst we go along wid our mouths wa-

terin' for one mo' bite of de taffy dat dey used to feed us on befo' we married.

"'Tain't dat dey don't love us no mo', Sis Vaseline, for dey do. A beefsteak may be des as much a token of affection as a bunch of violets is, an' when yo' ole man remembers to bring home a new remedy for yo' sciatica, hit may be des as much a valentine as ef he sent you a pink satin billydoo full of poetry 'bout loves an' doves. Only de woman would rather go hungry for de steak an' have de violets, an' suffer wid de pain an' git de valentine. An' de man wouldn't."

"Sis Mirandy," says Sis Vaseline, "do you know whut de real curse was dat was put on women when dey was turned out of de Garden of Eden on account of Eve gittin' mixed up in dat apple business? De hoodoo was for women to keep a soul dat was always slim, an' young, an' beautiful, an' romantic, in a body dat got ole an' fat an' dat nobody thought of fallin' in love wid."

"Dat's so," 'spons I, "de one thing dat a woman never loses is her sweet tooth."

"Sis Mirandy," axes Sis Vaseline, "didn't you never send Br'er Ike a valentine sence

you's got married, so as to see ef you could wake up de romance in him?"

"Yassum, I is," I 'spons, "one time when all de gals was a buyin' valentines, I jest thought dat I'd git one, an' send hit to my ole man, lak dey was sendin' to deir young ones, an' dat when he got to speculatin' 'bout who done hit I'd own up to de soft impeachment. An' I dest pictured dat he'd be tickled to death, an' dat we'd forgit dat we was ole, an' fat, an' grizzled-haided, an' go back to de days when we was co'tin'.

"Yassum, dat was de way dat I thought hit would wuk. An' so I took de money dat I was a-savin' to buy me one of dese heah weepin' willer fedders, an' I bought Ike a valentine dat was all hearts an' darts, an' roses, an' Cupids, an' poetry. Hit sho' was one gran' valentine, an' I went out an' mailed hit at night so he'd git hit de fust thing in de mawnin'.

"Wellum, hit come while we was to breakfast, an' instid of guessin' dat I was de onliest woman in de world dat would be fool enough to waste my money to send a valentine to a ole, bandy-laigged, bald-haided grandpa lak

him, Ike looked kin' of sheepish, an' stuck de valentine in his pocket, an' de fust news I knowed, he'd done spruced up in his good clothes, an' I see him wid his hat on de side of his haid, a walkin' up de street past de do' of dat hussy, Ma'y Sue Jones, an' he was a grinnin', an' a smirkin' up at de window, an' I know he done think she sent him dat valentine.

"Yassum, an' dat warn't de last of hit. He keep a-passin' by dat woman's house, an' a-makin' a ole fool of hisself a wavin' at her, till I tell him dat I sent de valentine, an' he was dat mad when he found hit out, an' dat hit warn't from some odder woman dan his wife, dat he ain't speak to me for fo' days. Nawm, dat valentine ain't fanned de flame of love none in our house. Hit mighty nigh put hit out."

"Sis Mirandy," axes Sis Vaseline, "don't you think dat husbands would be pleased to git valentines from deir wives?"

"I think dat dey would ruther have de price put in de market-basket," I 'spons.

"But sholy, Sis Mirandy, you thinks dat husbands an' wives should keep up deir ro-

mantical feelin's towards each other," axes Sis Vaseline.

"Well, Sis Vaseline," I 'spons, "I thinks dat most men gits married so dat dey can quit makin' love, an' climb down off'n de poetry shelf to whar dey feels at home. What a man wants wid a wife is somebody dat'll keep on lovin' him widout him havin' to hol' her han' all de time, an' tell her whut a angel she is, an' I done took notice dat dem wives which am good cooks don't git so many divorsches as dem ladies whose strong p'int is sentiment.

"Valentines an' love talk is all very well to tole a man into de holy bonds of matermony, but when you gits him dere, de way to keep him from jumpin' over de bars is to fill him up wid good food, an' let him read his paper in peace.

"Nawm, I don't hol' none wid married women sendin' deir husbands valentines, an' encouragin' romantical notions in 'em, for hit fills deir haids up wid de notion dat dey's still fascinators wid de women, an' is got a gift for love-makin' dat hit's a pity to waste on deir wives. De wise wife am de one whut prones hit into her husband dat she's de only woman

in de world dat has got sense enough an' taste enough to know whut a wonder he is. Dat's de talk dat keeps him nailed to his own hearthstone. Not dis heah valentine foolishness."

POST MORTEMS

YISTIDY I was in a sto' buyin' me one of dem styley plaid gingham frocks dat you can heah comin' down de street dey's so noisy, when lo an' behol', I meets up wid Br'er Si an' Sis Luellen.

Sis Luellen, she was a-smilin' an' smirkin' in de lookin'-glass a-tryin' on one of dese heah hats dat's trimmed up wid wooden balls ontel hit looked lak she was wearin' de croquet set on her haid, an' Br'er Si, he had on dat pale, trimbly, Lord-have-mercy-on-me-an'-my-pocket-book expression dat a man always wears when he goes shoppin' wid his wife.

Pretty soon Sis Luellen say to de gal dat was waitin' on her dat she'll take dat hat becaze hit sholy is a young lookin' hat dat makes

de one whut is got hit on pear lak a lady-love instid of a wife, an' den she turned to Br'er Si an' say, "Ole man, I'll take some of my monument money."

"How much?" axes Br'er Si.

"Fifteen dollars," 'spons Sis Luellen, an' whilst Br'er Si fetched a groan lak he was tucken wid a sudden pain dat done struck him in a vital spot, he retched down into his jeens an' fished out three five-dollar bills, an' handed 'em over to Sis Luellen.

De way dey act suttenly did git me goin', an' so dis mawnin', when I meet up wid Sis Luellen, I say to her, "Sis Luellen," says I, "I ain't one of dem nosey women whut's always a promulgatin' deirselves into odder folkses business, an' whilst I might wisht to know how a woman wuks her rabbit's foot on her husban' to git fifteen plunks out of him for a hat wid no mo' back talk dan you handed Br'er Si, still I ain't a-axin' no questions 'bout dat, for de way ev'y woman conjures her husban' is her own secret dat she ain't bound to tell to nobody. Howsomever, I does make bold to inquire whut you meant by axin' Br'er Si for yo' monument money, for whilst I's

done heard 'bout English money an' French money, an' hard money an' soft money, I ain't never heard tell befo' 'bout no monument money."

"Shoo," 'spons Sis Luellen, givin' one of her nice, big, fat laughs, an' I suttenly does love to heah Sis Luellen laugh. Hit sounds jes' lak a pan of grease bubblin' an' fryin'. "Shoo," said she, "dat's des a little 'greement twixt me an' Si. You know dat when I married Si he was a widower, an' when his fust wife died he suttenly did do proud by her, an' he put up a monument over her in de cemetery dat cost fo' hundred dollars.

"Now Si's fust wife, she was a mighty hard-wukin' woman, an' mighty savin', she sweated ev'y nickel, an' she never took no pleasure, nor had no decent clothes, nor nothing, an' de fust real party she ever attended was her own funeral, an' de onliest present dat her husban' ever give her dat cost mo' dan a jitney was dat monument.

"When me an' Si was a courtin' he took me out to de cemetery an' showed me dat monument—to prove to me dat he knowed how to do de right thing by a wife, I reckon—

but hit didn't make no hit wid me, for my tastes don't run to tombstones, specially when dey's pussonal, so to speak.

"Nawm, I ain't got no sort of vanity 'bout my monument. I don't care whedder dey puts a sky-piercin' shaft or a brickbat over my dead remains. Nuther is I interested in whut sort of a lookin' corpse I's gwine to make, an' when I'm a angel twangin' away on my golden harp in de heavenly choir, I don't specs hit's gwine to cut any ice wid me whut folks thought of me when I was back on de earth.

"But I do care a lot 'bout whut happens to me in dis worl', while I's still alive an' wantin' things, an' can enjoy 'em. So I told Si dat I'd jest take de price of my monument as I went along, instid of waitin' for him to spend hit on puttin' up a piece of stone on my grave when I was dead.

"Darfo' when I wants anything dat costs a little bit mo' dan I ought to pay, maybe, I jest collects de price of hit in advance out of whut I calls my monument money."

"My lan'," sclaims I, "but you suttenly is de fore-handed woman, an' hit's a pity dere ain't mo' lak you dat's got enough sense to

cash in on deir good deeds, an' collect de debts whut folks owes 'em whilst dey's livin', instid of waitin' ontel after dey's dead to git deir pay."

Yassum, I reckon a cemetery is de most sarcastical place dere is in de whole worl', an' I bet dat de biggest surprise dat de souls of de departed has is not when dey beholds de wonders of de new Jerusalem wid hits golden streets, but de knock-out blow dey gits when dey looks on at deir own funeral an' finds out whut folks really thought of 'em.

Yassum. Dere was ole Aunt Sukey dat lived alone in one little measly room dat warn't big enough to swing a cat in, an' Aunt Sukey was dat crippled up wid de rheumatiz dat she couldn't hobble mo' dan a few feet from her doorway, an' she was dat fond of flowers dat she'd pick up a broken rose dat somebody done drapped in de street, an' cuddle hit lak hit was a new-born baby.

Wellum, I don't call to mind dat whilst Sis Sukey was alive, an' could have enjoyed a little pot of posies, ary one of us ever give her so much as a geranium leaf, but when Sis Sukey died all of us remembered how she

loved flowers, and we des smothered her coffin in roses.

An' dere was Br'er Ike. Br'er Ike, he was one of dese quiet little men dat don't never learn how to toot deir own horn, an quensecontly dey don't git hit tooted, an' nobody don't notice dat when dere's any call for folks to do things dey's Johnny-on-de-spot.

Br'er Ike, he run de chu'ch, an' he wiped de tears from de widow's eyes, an' helped de po' an' de needy, but he did hit all so quiet dat nobody never took no notice of whut he was doin', an' I don't reckon anybody ever passed him a compliment, or even thanked him, much less tell him how gran' an' noble he was, in de whole of his lifetime.

But one day Br'er Ike up an' die, an' den we suttenly did give him de grandest funeral dat you ever lay yo' eyes on. Dere was floral pieces wid ribbons wid "Our Leader" printed on 'em, an' dere was marchin' clubs, an' carriages, an' fo' horses to de hearse. An' ev'ybody was talkin' deir tongue off tellin' whut a wonderful man Br'er Ike was, an' how much good he done, an' wonderin' how we's gwine to git along widout him.

An' dere was Sis Eunice whut was one of dese gentle, sweet, timid, clingin' little women dat des blossoms out onder kind treatment lak a flower in de sun, an' des withers away an' shrivels up onder coldness an' neglect. Sis Eunice got tied up, as dat kind of a woman most ginerally does, wid a human icicle, whut thinks dat hit's a husband's sacred duty to knock his wife's faults an' pass over her virtues.

Sis Eunice didn't live long. She des froze up an' died in de cold storage kind of a home dat her husban' took her to live in, an' when she pass away he put up a fine monument over her grave dat had on hit, "My Beloved Wife."

You know I never goes to de cemetery an' sees dat widout wonderin' ef at night de ghost of Sis Eunice ever comes back an' roosts on dat tombstone, an' reads dat inscription, "My Beloved Wife," an' ef hit does, ef hit's any comfort to hit?

Hit must be news to Sis Eunice to find out dat her husban' loved her, becaze he sholy didn't give any signs of hit whilst she was alive, an' somehow I's got my s'picions dat dis heah post-mortem affection, dat don't show

hitself till after de funeral, gits in hits wuk a leetle mite too late.

Yassum, when I's passed on an' is got to be a sheriff in de skies, I ain't calculatin' to take any interest in whedder my family an' friends is sheddin' barrels of tears over my loss, or is reconciled to de mysterious decrees of Providence in removin' me from deir midst. Neither is I figurin' on bein' cast down, or puffed up, by whut dey say 'bout me. Nor does I specs to have ev'ything I didn't git in life made up to me by a handsome tombstone.

"An' dat's why I wants folks to give me whut's comin' to me right now, whilst I can enjoy hit. Ef anybody is got any flowers to give me, I wants 'em whilst I can smell 'em, an' see 'em, an' hold 'em, instid of deir bein' laid on my coffin. Ef anybody's got any kind words to say of me, I wants 'em to say 'em to me now whilst dey will hearten my heart an' give me de courage to go on. I don't want 'em to wait ontel my ears is deaf in death. An' ef anybody loves me, I wants 'em to show hit to me right now an' heah whilst I can enjoy hit, instid of waitin' to carve deir sentiments on my tombstone. Hit won't make no difference to

me den, but hit would change de worl' for me now.

I's lak Sis Luellen. I wants to spend my monument money whilst I can git some good of hit.

MATRIMONY AND MONEY

"WELL," says I de odder night when me an' my ole man, Ike, was a-settin' aroun' real sociable togedder, wid de lamp a-castin' hits glow over de fambly circle, an' little Teddy Roosterfelt a-playin' on de flo' betwixt us, "well, I sees in de paper dat anodder one of dem millionaires is a-gittin' anodder divorsch."

"Humph," 'sclaims Ike, "de way de rich indulges deirselves in luxuries sholy am scandalous. Hit ain't no wonder dat hit makes folks dat has to wear deir ole clothes, an' stick to deir ole husbands an' wives, feel lak turnin' into one of dese heah anarchists, an' gittin' a boom an' goin' out an' bustin' up somethin'."

"I wonder why hit is," I pursues, "dat people dat has got money finds hit so hard to stay married to de same pusson, an' is always a-wantin' to swap partners? A po' man or woman manages to rock along pretty comfortable wid de same wife or husban' for forty or fifty yeahs. But de minute anybody gits money in de bank, dey gits kin' of restless in double harness, an' de next news you knows dey's done kicked over de traces.

"Cou'se I can see why de man whut was married to a woman who was a good cook, an' washer, an' patcher, an' dat could help him whilst he was po', feels lak dat he needs to git a pretty young wife dat's real styly, as soon as he strikes ile. He has to git a wife to match his new plush furniture, but de millionaires dat marries female millionaires don't 'pear lak dat dey is able to stay hitched togedder no better dan de odders dat got married befo' dey knowed dat de Lawd was gwine to call 'em to be de head of a trust.

"Dat's de reason dat I say dat hit looks lak dat money is a marriage-buster. An' dat's curis an' curiser, for hit does seem as ef a couple dat didn't have no call to scrap over

de grocery-bill an' de butcher-bill, suttenly would have de biggest bone of contention in de fambly skeleton removed from deir midst.

"My goodness," I goes on, a-castin' a meanin' glance at Ike, "I lays dat I could live as peaceable as a basket of kittens wid a man dat I didn't have to keep a eye on."

"Yes, Lawd," 'spons Ike wid a groan, "dem folks whut's got plenty of money an' ain't got nothin' to worry 'em but a misfit wife or husban' is just gwine out of deir way to hunt for trouble. Me, ef I didn't have to worry over de rent, I wouldn't let a little thing lak bein' married to de wrong woman bodder me none."

"Dat's right," says I, "whut's missin' yo' affinity to missin' de bill-collector?"

"I tell you, Mirandy," says Ike, "why dese heah rich folks is always a-gittin' divorsches—hit's to pass de time away. A millionaire gits a house, or a horse, or a orty-mobile dat he gits tired of, an' he thinks dat he'll amuse hisself by gwine out an' tradin' hit off wid somebody else, but dere ain't no excitement 'bout dat, becaze dere ain't no difficulties in de way. All dat he's got to do is

to put his hands in his pocket an' pay de loss, an' dere he is wid anodder house, or horse, or ortymobile dat he don't lak no better dan he did de fust one.

"Hit sholy does git on his nerves, an' make him peevish, ontel one day a good idee strikes him, an' dat is dat he'll trade off his wife for a new one, an' dat takes a lot of trouble, an' makes a lot of scandal, an' costs him a lot of alermony, an' hit's full of excitement, an' sort of gives him a run for his money, an' dat's why he does hit."

"Maybe so," 'spons I, "but whut makes de rich fall out of love wid each odder oftener dan de po' does?"

"Dey don't," says Ike, "but de difference is dat de po' is so busy wrastlin' wid de problem of how dey is gwine to git po'k chops for supper dat dey ain't got de time to notice whedder deir hearts palpitates at de approach of de one dat dey is tied to, or not. But de rich ain't got nothin' to do but to set up an' hold deir fingers on deir pulses, an' watch de state of deir affections, an' see whedder dey's at fever heat, or is done drapped below normal.

"Now des take ourselves, Mirandy, I specs

dat ef we was to go probin' aroun', we'd find out dat dere was 'bout forty-leven different ways in which we didn't suit each odder, an' dat you didn't look to me lak one of dese heah Venuses, an' dat you warn't in no danger of mistakin' me for one of dem godlike young gentlemen in de ready-made clothin' advertisements.

"Mo'over, ef either one of us was to be tooken wid a thrillin' feelin' when we happened to look at de odder one, we'd make sho' dat we'd done got malaria, an' we'd soak our feet in hot musta'd-water, an' take a dose of quinine, an' go to bed.

"Maybe, too, each one of us is got a real soul-mate somewhar in de neighborhood, but bein' po' an' havin' to scuffle to make de ends meet, we ain't never had time to find none of dese things out. So we goes joggin' along togedder in peace, lak two good ole wuk-horses dat is fell into each odder's stride, an' pulls togedder widout no bitin' nor kickin', nor buckin', nor jumpin'.

"Now ef we was rich, dis would all be different. When I'd come home of a night, I wouldn't be hongry, an' you wouldn't look to

me lak you does, lak a angel wid a fryin'-pan in her han', surrounded by a halo of fried onions an' liver. No! I would see dat you was gittin' ole an' fat, an' I'd begin to think 'bout perambulatin' off after some young gal, dat was young enough to be my daughter.

"An' when you took a squint at me, I wouldn't look to you lak de noble hero dat stood wid his good right arm betwixt you an' de po'-house. You would see dat I's got hump-shouldered an' bandy-legged a-totin' a hod, an' layin' brick, an' you'd sort of prognosticate 'bout some young buck dat you'd seed dancin' on one toe at de skatin'-rink.

"Den, havin' nothin' else to do, an' bein' sort of tired of odder amusements, we'd git to wonderin' why we ever married each odder, an' den some fine day we'd start out an' hunt up a lawyer an' a private detective, an' den we'd end up wid de odder millionaires in de divorsch co't."

"Amen," says I, "dat's God's truth. Ef married folks has got time to take stock of each odder's faults, an' remember how aggerfrettin' each odder is, hit's a wonder to me dat dey stays married at all."

"Yassum," says Ike, "bein' po' sholy is de fust help to virtue. You don't hear of no po' man leadin' de double life, becaze hit keeps him on de jump to lead a single life, wid a wife an' a growin' fambly. Darfo', dat do' of temptation is shut to de po' man, whilst hit is wide open to de rich man, dough why any man in his senses wants to tackle matermony mo' dan once beats me."

"Hit looks lak," says I, "dat de onliest way dat a woman can keep her husban' is by keepin' his nose on de grin'stone."

"Don't you worry none 'bout dat, Mirandy," 'spons Ike, "you've got mine down so close dat ef one of dese heah livin' pictures what you reads about was to pass by I couldn't look up enough to see her."

BABIES

"I RECKON dat babies is de curiousest nation of people dere is, an' de deceitfulest. Yassum, dere ain't no guessin' a baby.

"You look at one dat looks lak a cross betwixt a biled lobster an' a cream cheese, an' hit seems to you dat dere ain't nothin' in dat baby but innocence an' sterilized milk, but you des dast to cross hit, an' my lan'! you find out dat hit's des sloshin' over wid red-haided temper an' cussedness, an' de things dat hit yowls at you raises de goose-flesh on you wid horror. Yassum, ef I ever is heard cussin' an' swearin', I's heard hit in a baby's cryin'.

"An' hit looks to you lak a baby is a po', weak little critter widout no strength to hit, yit I have seen one dat didn't weigh twelve

pounds wear a husky, six-foot man dat ondertook to wrastle wid hit to a frazzle.

"An' as for bein' a boss, dere ain't no argifyin' who's de haid of de house in a fambly dat's got a baby. De baby's Hit, an' as a slave-driver it's got all of dese heah Simon Legrees an' Uncle Tom Cabinses in de play backed off of de boards. Dere ain't nobody but a baby dat'll wuk you, whedder you are sick or well, twenty-four hours a day.

"Yassum, I done heard somebody say oncet dat a baby was a well-spring of joy in de house. I ain't a 'sputin' dat, but you sholy is got yo' wuk cut out for you ef youse got a baby, becaze hit keeps you on de jump from mawnin' till night, an' from night till mawnin', an' de funniest part of hit all is dat you des loves dat little bunch of trials an' tribulations dat somehow has got yo' heart des squeezed up in hit's little fat fists, so dat no matter how tired an' worn you is wid loss of sleep an' rest, you don't never think 'bout quittin' on de job.

"Yassum, ef yo' husban' or wife was to tyrannize over you lak a baby does, you'd be haided straight for de divorsch cou't. An' ef

any employer was to wuk you as hard, an' as many hours a day as a baby does, de union would call a strike on him. But you stands for bein' ordered aroun' lak a dog by a baby, an' nobody ain't heard about de Amalgamated Order of Mothers givin' notice dat de refreshment counter shut up at six o'clock, an' dere wouldn't be no meals served later.

"Yassum, I specs dere ain't none of dese heah hypnotists in de side-shows dat's got de power in de eye dat a baby's got in hits pale little eye, dat ain't got no eyelashes an' no eyebrows, an' dat looks lak a burnt hole in a blanket. Yassum, a baby's eye sho' has got de conjer in hit.

"But de most peculiar peculiarity 'bout a baby is de effect dat hit has on de folks dat hit associates wid. Hit makes 'em, or ruins 'em. Hit always makes me laugh when I hears folks talk 'bout de way dey is gwine to mold deir chillun's characters. Hit's de chillun dat does de moldin' of de parients' character, an' a little, teenty, weenty baby can change a grown man or woman mo' in two days dan a grown man or woman can change a baby in twenty yeahs.

"Yassum, you can always tell folks dat's got a baby, an' you don't have to look at de greasy spots in de middle of deir backs, neider. Dey's des got a chastened look, an' hit's sort of a glorified look, too, lak dem Early Christian Martyrs whut had done suffered in well-doin', an' walkin' de colic.

"Cou'se we calls babies little angels, but when I sees de demoralizin' effect dat 'sociatin' wid a baby has on some folks, I sometimes wonders whedder dey's angels of light or angels of darkness, an' whedder dey comes from up above or down below.

"Yassum, I's seed some sad cases of nice, polite, truthful, modest folks dat done lost all of dem good qualities an' got to be rude, rough liars an' braggers through havin' a baby.

"Now dere's Sally Ann. You couldn't find a nicer gal dan Sally Ann. She was whut you call sympathetic, an' dere warn't nothin' mo' soothin' to yo' feelin's dan to go an' set wid her of a afternoon, an' have a cup of tea, an' tell her yo' troubles.

"She'd listen wid her eyes full of tears, she was dat interested an' pitiful to you; an' she'd des hang on yo' words an' urge you to talk

on, an' she never would come back wid any tale of woe herself, so dere warn't nothin' to mar yo' pleasure in de occasion.

"But after a while Sally Ann got married an' had a baby, an' when you goes to see her now, an' tries to onburden yo' griefs to her, she don't even pertend to listen. In de very midst of de word where you is relatin' how yo' husban' is holdin' out de money on you an' hangin' aroun' dat yaller hussy, Almerety Johnsing, an' dat you's stood all dat flesh an' blood can stand, an' you's sniffin' real comfortable into yo' teacup, why Sally Ann gurgles out, clappin' her hands: 'Oh, Sis Mirandy, des look how cute muvver's own tootsy-wootsy is lookin' at you t'rough de back of dat chair.' An' you knows dat she ain't heard nary syllable you is uttered.

"Furdermo', when you pauses to take breath, she jumps in wid tellin' you of all de times de baby has fell down an' bumped hits nose, an' de hard time hit had cuttin' hits teeth, which news she seems to think dat you is settin' up waitin' for wid yo' tongue hangin' out, lak hit was a war bulletin from de front.

"Nawm, a baby suttenly does take away

folks' manners, an' I don't know of nobody dat's duller company dan a young mother. As for me, when de fust baby comes, I bids farewell to de parients for de next twenty yeahs, becaze you won't git no mo' rational conversation out of 'em ontel deir chillun has done growed up, an' married, an' settled.

"Den dere's Sally Ann's husban', Mose. Mose suttenly was truthful James, whut stuck so tight to de facts dat dere was times an' seasons when hit was sorter uncomfortable to have him aroun'. An' he was modest, too. When he tole 'bout de things dat he did he always put on de soft pedal an' talk meek an' humble as de next one.

"But dat was befo' dat baby come. You ought to see him now. He done stuck out his chest till his shirt buttons won't hold, an' when he goes to norrate 'bout dat baby, he des flings truth to de winds so hit won't hamper him none.

"'Sis Mirandy, ma'am,' says he to me when I met him de odder mawnin' an' stopped to pass de time of day, 'Sis Mirandy, ma'am, you ought to come an' see dat baby. I never seed such a wonderful chile in my life. Hit's got

de most remarkable intelligence dat I ever looked at in de human countenance. Why, Sis Mirandy, dat baby ain't but two weeks ole an' yit hit knows ev'y word I say to hit, an' hit cries for me when I leaves de room. An' furdermo', Sis Mirandy, I ain't sayin' hit becaze dat baby's mine, but hit suttenly is a beauty, and would take de blue ribbon in any baby show.'

"An' den he brags on an' on, ontel I can't stand hit no longer, an' I passes on.

"Yassum, dat's de way babies affects some folks. Dey goes to deir haids an' changes nice, sensible people into plumb idiots an' braggarts. An' sometimes babies go to folks' hearts an' change dem whut was mean, an' selfish, an' cold, an' hard, into regular human bein's dat's got love, an' pity, an' understandin' for all de worl' becaze of some little chile dat's done come to deir arms to stay.

"Ef you'll notice, dem folks whut calls chillun brats, an' dat has got nerves dat can't stand to heah chillun laugh an' play, most ginerally changes deir minds 'bout chillun after dey gits a baby of deir own. Dey calls chillun darlings den, an' dey thinks dat grown

folks ain't got no right dat a chile ought to respect.

"Yassum, babies sholy am a gran' institution, an' I don't know whut we'd do widout 'em. Dey keeps us po' an' humble, an' makes us proud an' braggy. Dey wuks us to death, an' we are glad to slave our fingers to de bone for 'em. We wonder whut odder folks sees in deir runty, knock-kneed, measly offspring dat makes 'em think dey is worth raisin', an' when we looks at our own, dey looks as beautiful, an' wonderful, as cherubim.

"Yassum, nobody don't know whut happiness is ontel dey is held deir own baby on deir breast. An' nobody don't know whut sorrow is ontel dey has turned away from de graveyard an' left deir little baby layin' out dere alone, cold in de snow.

"Me, I's knowed both."

LOVERS' CATECHISM

"Do you know dem pictures dat you sees in de papers, whar de pusson in one of 'em is po', an' scrawny, an' measly-lookin', an' is a hobblin' along on a cane, an' is dressed in clothes dat looks lak a year befo' last bird's nest; an' in de odder picture de pusson is fat, an' handsome, an' sassy-lookin', an' is a-ridin' aroun' in one of dese heah ortymobiles, an' is dressed up fit to kill in styly clothes, an' one of de pictures is got 'Befo' Takin'' under hit, an' de odder picture has got 'After Takin'' under hit?

"Well, dat medicine, whutever hit is—an' hit must be a searchin' subjance—don't wuk no greater change in folkes's looks an' de way dey acts an' thinks dan matermony does. Yassum, befo' we gits our dose of de holy estate of

matermony, we sho' does look at things one way, an' after we done swallowed de pill, we suttenly does look at hit from anodder pint of view.

"Now dere's my daughter, Ma'y Jane, whut's in love, an' has got hit bad. She goes aroun' de house wid a far-away look in her eye, an' she sets down befo' de kitchen-stove, an' lets de bread burn in de oven, an' de cat drink de milk, an' de dog git de po'k-chops, whilst she wonders how hit comes dat dat chuckle-haided, knock-kneed, lanky Sim Johnsing is so much handsomer, an' smarter, an' nobler dan any odder man in de world.

"Yassum, dere ain't no trouble in tellin' when a gal is in love. De signs of hit breaks out all over her lak hit was de measles, an' Ma'y Jane suttenly am got a bad case. When anybody tells anything dat is sorter meraculous, she waits ontel dey gits through, an' den she ups an' says whut Sim says on de subject, as ef dat settled hit. Yassum, Ma'y Jane suttenly am surprised dat de President don't ax Sim down to run de gov'mint, an' dat dem folks in Washington ain't called Sim in to settle dem questions dat's worryin' 'em.

"Furdermo', she goes about a-pickin' up de segar-stubs dat Sim drops, an' tyin' 'em up to de wall wid blue ribbon, an' de odder night she waked her pa up to ax him ef he reckoned dat Sim could have got lost a-gwine home, or maybe been kidnapped, an' him a double-jinted nigger dat lives in de next block.

"Ike, he was mighty mad at havin' his rest broken, an' I had my hands full a-calmin' him down. 'Sho',' I says, 'don't you worry 'bout Ma'y Jane. Of course hit does look lak she done lost her mind, but she'll find hit again as soon as she gits married. She's jes' in love now, but she'll git over hit. I used to act dat ve'y same way 'bout you, an' now des look at me.'

"To which Ike respond' dat ef I did act foolish, I had good cause to, but how any gal could see anything in dat slab-sided Sim Johnsing to go crazy 'bout beat him, an' to dat I remarked, sorter casual lak, dat dem was de very presacical words dat my pa said 'bout him when he was a cou'tin' me. An' wid dat Ike turned over an' begin to snore lak he didn't heah me.

"Cou'se I wasn't gwine to let on to Ike

dat I 'greed wid him, 'caze hit sets a man up too much for his wife to always be a-chimin' in wid him 'bout ev'ything dat he prognosticates. But all de same, hit sholy am a techin' thing to witness all de different kinds of a plum idiot dat a gal makes of herself when she's in love, an' when I heahs a young couple a-billin' an' a-cooin', I laughs out of one side of my mouth, an' cries out of de odder. Becaze dey is missin' all of de pints in matermony, an' dey ain't got no more idee of whut dey wants in a husband or a wife dan a baby has dat cries for de moon. Dey don't even know whut kind of questions to ask each odder. Dey spends deir time a-buildin' scaffolds in de air, when dey ought to be busy puttin' de foundation under de cabin dat dey's got to live in.

"Yassum, dat's so. Ma'y Jane an' Sim, dey's jes' lak you, an' me, an' ev'ybody else dat's ever been in love, an' deir conversation runs des lak hit was drawed out of de same jug of molasses as yours an' mine was. De odder night when dey was a-spoonin' on de parlor sofy, I overhears Sim ax Ma'y Jane ef she's sure dat she will love him straight on through

dis worl' an' into de next, an' Ma'y Jane 'spons by inquirin' of Sim ef he is sutten dat his devotion will never git less, even ef she should git ole, an' fat, an' lose her teeth. Den Sim begins to question Ma'y Jane 'bout whedder she has ever loved befo', an' Ma'y Jane demand to know ef she's de only woman in de worl' to Sim. Den Sim axes Ma'y Jane ef she is sho dat she will never be sorry for entrustin' her angel self to him, an' Ma'y Jane begins to sniffle an' axes Slim to swear dat he will never marry agin ef she should die.

"An' I bust out laughin' so dat I most drapped de chany pitcher dat I was a-washin' at de sink. Becaze dem questions was de befo'-takin' questions whut dem whut ain't never had no 'sperience in matermony axes de party of de odder part. Dey ain't de questions dat a after-takin' pusson would put to de one dat dey was thinkin' 'bout tyin' up wid, ef dey had to do hit again. Nawm, I ain't never heard no widows an' widowers cou'tin', but I bet fo' bits to a ginger-cake, dat dey don't waste no time a-hurlin' dem fool questions at one anodder.

"Now, ef I was gwine to marry Ike over

again, I wouldn't bodder to ax him whedder he would love me forever, an' whedder he was sutten I was his soul-mate, an' ef he would pine away an' die ef anything was to happen to me. Nuthermo' would I make him perjure hissel' by swearin' dat he ain't never gwine to take notice of no odder female, an' dat all de amusement he wants for de balance of his life is des to hold my hand an' gaze in my eyes, an' tell me dat I is de most beautiful creature on earth. Nawm, ef I was puttin' de man dat I was gwine to marry through de catechism, I'd ax him 'bout de state of his stomach instid of de state of his heart, an' inquire ef he was one of de men whut et whut was set befo' him widout askin' no questions, or ef he was one of dem men whut's always a-throwin' deir ma's biscuits in deir wives' teeth.

"An' I wouldn't ax him ef he give me his heart's devotion. I'd inquire ef he was gwine to turn over 'nough money to me ev'y Saturday night, an' I wouldn't be so much interested in knowin' whether I was his affinity as I would be in findin' out whedder he would expect me to help suppo't de fambly. Furdermo', I wouldn't make him promise dat he'd

spend de rest of his life a-kneelin' at my feet. I'd make him promise dat he'd wipe his feet on de mat befo' he'd come into de house, an' dat he'd hang up his Sunday clothes, an' dat he'd take his turn in walkin' de colic.

"Yassum, dem's de questions dat I would ax de candidate for my heart an' hand, an' he'd have to answer 'em right straight off de reel ef he got me. An' I kinder s'picions dat ef Ike was a-cou'tin' me ag'in he wouldn't waste so much time a-trying to find out ef he was de hero of my girlish dreams, an' de livin' image of my ideal. Nawm, I 'spec's dat he'd ax me how I stands on de latch-key problem, an' how much of his wages I'd keep. An' den I lay he would inquire 'bout whedder I was a good cook or not, an' he would spend mo' time investigatin' de length of my tongue dan he would de length of my affections.

"An' when we got through de examination of each odder, maybe we'd marry, an' lakly we wouldn't, 'caze hit's mighty easy to swear dat yo' love is eternal, but hit's pretty hard to prove dat you is de kind of a pusson dat is easy an' comfortable to git along wid for de twenty, or thu'ty, or fo'ty yeahs dat you is

lakly to have to live wid de one dat you is married to. Yassum, dem of us whut is tried matermony sholy would ax mighty different questions from dem whut is axed by dose whut ain't never been through de mill."

OLD WIVES FOR NEW

I SUTTENLY am eatin' humble pie dese days. Yassum, I ain't a-marchin' myself up no mo' an' takin' a front seat on de flatform wid dem whut promulgates dat dey knows de unknowable, an' can explain de inexplicable, an' unscrew de inscrutable. Nawm, I's gone away back an' set down amongst de lowly an' de ignorant, for hit's done been proned into me dat maybe I couldn't run de world no better dan de Lawd is doin' hit, even ef I got a chanst at de job.

I used to believe dat I could manage things a heap sight better dan dey is managed, an' to think dat if de Creator had axed my advice, dat I could have saved Him from makin' a lot of blunders an' mistakes. An' I used to worry a lot becaze so many people died dat hit looked

lak ought to have lived forever, an' so many people lived forever whose funerals we all was des a-pinin' an' a-honin' to attend.

Yassum, I is done my sheer, a-worryin' over de mistakes dat de Good Master was makin', but whut has made me lose mo' sleep an' flesh dan anything else is frettin' over de fact dat a man's fust wife most generally always wuks herself to death layin' up money, an' quilts, an' things for his second wife to splurge on.

Many is de time, when I's been a-settin' up wid de remains of some po' woman, dat I would look at her back dat was all bent over wid wuk, an' at her hands dat was all knotted up wid de washtub, an' my mind would take to runnin' on how dat woman had toiled, an' nussed nickels, boostin' her husban' up de ladder, an' now dat dey had got on de sunny side of Easy Street by her leadin' de way, hit sholy did look to me lak Providence had boggled things not lettin' her live to enjoy some of de comforts dat she done earned.

Yassum, dat's de way dat po', worn-out, peaked woman would look to me, an' in my heart I would think dat ef I was a-runnin' de universe, I'd give her a squarer deal. But I

ain't so certain now dat she didn't git hit. Anyways, I specs de good Gawd is fitten to manage de world He made widout any advice from ole Mirandy, an' dat when a man's fust wife dies 'bout de time she begins to git fat, an' grizzle-haided, an' stiff in de jints, dat maybe she's tooken from whut Br'er Jinkins calls "de wrath to come."

Yassum, when I looks aroun' at a lot of de ole wives 'bout me, 'specially dem wives whut has got peart husbands whut's got good jobs an' money in de saving-bank, I don't know but whut dem wives whut's got a real styly tombstone wid "Rest in Peace" carved on it above 'em in de cemetery is got de best of hit. Dey's in luck. Leastways dey sholy is de onliest ones dat's got any rest or peace.

Hit can't be no mo' lonesomer in a coffin dan hit is to set at home by yo'self of a evenin' wid yo' face tied up for de neuralgy wid kerosene in a ole sock, whilst you 'spicions dat yo' husban', whut said he had business downtown, is a fox-trottin' wid a spry young gal, wid a telefoam-post figger, an' one of dese heah postage-stamp skirts, an', furdermo', to know dat de assembled company, instid of

lambastin' him for sidesteppin' away from his own fireside, is a-sympathizin' wid him 'bout bein' tied down to a wife dat looks lak a perambulatin' fedder-bed, an' whut is a better performer on de kitchen stove dan she is on a ballroom flo'.

Nor is de grave any colder dan dem husbands whut is done got tired of deir ole wives, an' whut looks lak dey thought dat dey orter git a medal for doin' deir duty ev'y time dey gives 'em a peck on deir cheeks whut passes for a kiss. Yassum. Providence sholy does wuk in a mysterious way hits wonders to perform wid husbands an' wives, an' hit suttenly does keep you guessin' as to whut de rewards of a good wife is, short of de crown of glory an' a angel harp, which none of us ain't in no hurry to collect.

What makes me say whut I do is, I's just come from Sis Bell's funeral. You know Sis Bell, whut married dat onery little Ben Simpkins, whut wouldn't have been nothin' widout her. But Sis Bell was one of dese heah up-an'-doin' women, whut could make fo' blackberry pies out of three blackberries an' ev'y one of 'em would taste good.

An', my lands, but she was a wuker! De way she could wrastle wid de washtub was a caution, an' she saved Ben's money, an' she kept his clothes clean an' neat, an' she got up an' cooked him a early breakfast, an' got him off to wuk on time, an' dere was a hot dinner a-smokin' on de table when he got home, an' she pushed an' pulled him along, ontel by an' by, instid of gittin' two dollars a day he was gittin' three, an' a little mo' an' he was gittin' five dollars 'caze Sis Bell, she was always a-standin' right behin' him, a-shovin' him into ev'y little gap dat opened up.

Den Ben got a chanst to git a little shop of his own, an' Sis Bell retched down in her stocking an' found de money for hit dat she done save up. An' after a bit hit got so dat Ben could wear store clothes ev'y day an' walk aroun' wid a pencil behin' his ear a-swearin' at de men whut was wukin' for him, instid of bein' swore at by de folks dat he was wukin' for, an' den whut does Sis Bell do but up an' die.

Yassum, hit sholy did look hard to me dat she didn't live to collect whut she done wuked fo' so many yeahs, an' I shed a barrel of tears

as I looked at her a-layin' so still in her coffin wid her hands folded idle across her breast fo' de fust time since she done got married. Ef she had lived, she could have took things easy from now on an' had a gran' time wid nothin' to worry her, I says to myself as I wiped my weepin' eyes.

But comin' on home from Sis Bell's funeral, I sorter changed my mind 'bout death bein' de saddest thing on earth, for I meet up wid Sam Pigget, an' he tell me dat he's gwine to git a divorsch from Sally Ann, an' Sally Ann is done do for Sam Pigget des whut Sis Bell done do for Ben. But Sally Ann ain't have de luck to die. She live to see her husban' ashamed of her an' try to git rid of her. 'Cou'se I spressifies my surprise at whut Sam is gwine to do.

"Huh," says he, "I's des a-follerin' de fashions of de rich an' great. I's des gwine to do lak dem millionaireses does whut started out po' an' humble, an' married dat way, an' den when dey got rich an' prosp'ous, dey traded off deir ole wives for new wives to match deir new parlor furniture."

"Whut for you gwine to divorsch Sally

Ann?" I axes him. "I ain't never heared dat she done nothin' but good to you."

"Dat's de true word," he 'spons, "an' I ain't a-flingin' no asparagus on Sally Ann's character. Whut I'm gwine to divorsch her for is whut dey calls in de law de incomparability of temper, which signifies dat she's got ole an' ugly, an' de rheumatiz, an' dat I wants a new wife whut's a good looker an' dat will show off de fine clothes dat I hangs on her."

"Huh," says I, "hit pears to me lak hit has done took a good many yeahs for you to find out dat you an' Sally Ann ain't got de incomparability of temper. I didn't hear nothin' 'bout no incomparability of temper in de days when she went out scrubbin' to git money to help you along, an' when she set up half de night a-patchin' yo' breeches."

"I's done outgrowed Sally Ann, an' progressed beyond her," says he, "an' hit ain't right dat I should be sacerficed to de mistakes of my youth." An' wid dem words Sam went on his way.

Yassum, dat's de way hit goes, an' hit looks lak dat de only way dat de wife of a man whut gits along in de world can keep from

bein' de mistake of his youth is for her to die. When folks is po' an' humble when dey marries, an' holds deir own at not gittin' any better off as de time goes by, dey seems to git along pretty comfortable wid de same husban' an' de same wife as long as dey lives, but when a man makes money, de fust thing he wants to do is to swap off his ole wife for a new one dat don't weigh mo' dan half as much an' ain't mo' dan half as ole. Dat's whut makes hit mighty discouragin' to a woman to try to help her husban' along, for as long as dey's po', dar he is, but when he gits money, whar is he? Dere ain't but one woman dat will help a man make money, an' dat's his wife. But ev'y woman will help him spend hit.

Hit's funny, ain't hit, dat we all sympathizes wid de man whut used to tote a hod an' wear overalls when he gits up so dat he forgits his feet in company, an' can wear one of dem pigeon-tailed coats an' cutaway westcoats widout feelin' lak he's half naked, when he has got a wife dat is still de ve'y spi't an' image of de kitchen range? We think hit's hard on him to have to be held down in his prosperity by dat kin' of a wife, an' we forgit dat ef he

hadn't had dat kin' of a wife, he most generally wouldn't 'a' had de prosperity.

An' I specs de Lawd knows dat, an' dat's de reason dat He so often removes by death de wife of de man whut has come up in de world instid of waitin' for her husban' to remove her by divorsch. Yassum, I suttenly am gwine to leave dis matter in de Good Master's hands. An' I'm gwine down-town de fust thing in de mawnin' to buy me one of dese heah new hoop-skirt silk frocks wid dat money I done been savin' up to help Ike along wid, fo' I ain't gwine to be one of dem fool women dat wuks herself to death makin' deir husbands a good ketch for some odder woman. Nawm, dat I ain't. I's gwine to remove all temptation out of dat man's path by keepin' him so po' dat his ole wife will be good enough for him.

MEN AND THE DOMESTIC ART

"BLESS Gawd dat I done live to see dis day," says Sis Hannah Jane to me de odder arternoon as she retched out for de teapot, an' poured de dreenings into her cup. "Dey done freed de nigger wid de wah, an' dey done freed de mule wid dese heah ortymobile wagons, an' now we po' put-upon women is gwine to be freed at las'."

"Glory be for de hope," says I, "but whar's de wharfo'ness of yo' prognostications? So fur as I kin see, things is jest a-rockin' along in de same ole odd-come-short way for our sect lak dey always is. Whut's done happen dat makes you think dat we is 'bout to grab hold of de tail-fedders of de bird of liberty?"

"Why," says Sis Hannah Jane, "ain't you

heard tell dat out dere at dat college in de West, dat dey's teachin' all de boys how to cook an' how to sew, so dat when dey grows up dey kin git up an' git deir own breakfas', an' sew on deir own buttons, an' darn deir own socks, an' patch deir own britches, so dat deir wives won't have a thing to do but to go to de movin'-picture show, an' de bargain sales, an' meander an' peruse up an' down de streets in deir good clothes?

"Dis is de real all-wool, dyed in de yarn emancipation of our sect. Whut was bein' freed of yo' political shackles to bein' freed from de washtub an' de cookin' stove? Whut's de privilege of de ballot to de privilege of havin' a husband dat'll do all de fambly mendin'? I tell you, Sis Mirandy, ma'am, de glad day of freedom is a-dawnin' for us po' pussecuted, down-trodden women, an' hit's comin' along of de sewin'-machine route for men."

"Well, Sis Hannah Jane," 'spons I, "ever sence we sent Thomas Jefferson Abraham Lincoln off to college, an' me an' his pa wuked our fingers to de bone to pay for hit, an' all dat he come home wid wuz a college yell, an' a frater-

nity pin, an' two busted ribs, an' de opinion dat he was ole man Solomon hisself, an' dat his parients wuz back numbers, I'se been kin' of suspicious of dat higher culchah. Hit looks lak to me dat hit don't take on jest ordinary folks, an' de odder kind ketch hit, anyway. But maybe ef dey's gwine to mix up de book larnin' wid some sewin' an' cookin', hit'll sort of take de curse off of a college eddication."

"All de same, Sis Mirandy," 'sclaims Sis Hannah Jane, "hit's a grand idee to teach men how to be handy aroun' de house, an' I jest loves to think of dat class of earnest-eyed young men bein' taught how to walk de colic, an' fix de baby's bottle, an' havin' hit proned in on deir youthful minds dat you don't wash a baby lak you does a setter-pup. Why, Sis Mirandy, ef my husban' wuz to ondertake to bathe my little Blanche Snowdrop, I makes no doubt dat he'd soap her all over wid mange soap, an' den take her by her years an' souse her down in de tub, an' den set her out in de sun to dry.

"I tell you, Sis Mirandy, I ain't never dast let deir pa nuss none of my chillun, becaze he handles a baby lak hit wuz a sack of potatoes,

an' he's des as liable to hol' hits head down as hits feet, but, thank Gord, all of my chillun is dat dark complected dey don't show dirt, so dey kin wait ontil I gits time to wash 'em myself."

"Amen," 'spons I, "an' you had orter see Ike, my ole man, when he tries to sew on a button. He starts off wid a gran' flourish, an' a-wearin' de look of one of dese heah early Christian martyrs, dat Br'er Jinkins tell 'bout, whut's done been tooken in an' sold a gold brick of a wife, but whut is too noble to say de things 'bout hit dat he's entitled to say. When I sees him wid dat sufferin' an' resigned expression, a-makin' for my wuk basket, I knows dat he's done busted a button off, an' is mad becaze I ain't been mind-reader enough to know hit.

"Den he rummages through my sewin' things ontel he makes a mess dat hit takes me two hours to straighten out, an' den he picks out de littlest needle, an' de biggest thread in hit, an' den he goes over by de window an' braces hisself in a chair against de wall lak he was startin' into a wrastlin' match. I offers to sew on de button, an' he says: 'Go 'way,

woman, dere ain't none of your sect dat kin do mo' dan paste a button on. I want dis one to hol', so I'se gwine to sew hit on myself.' Den I offers to thread the needle, an' he 'lows dat he ain't lost his eyesight, nor yit de use of his hands, an' dat ef I'll go an' 'tend to my business, he can 'tend to his, widout de benefit of any of my advice. Den I goes away.

"Long 'bout a half-hour afterwards I come along ag'in, an' Ike has got forty-leven spools of thread, an' fo' papers of needles scattered 'round him, an' is done tuk off his collar, an' spit on his hand, an' at las' has got de needle threaded, an' a kind of light of triumph is shinin' on his brow.

"Den he makes a jab at de button, an' he can't find de hole, an' den he makes 'bout fo' mo' jabs, widout finding it, an' den all of a sudden his needle goes through de hole, onexpected lak, an' 'bout a inch into his thumb, an' Ike gives a jump dat makes de cheer slip, an' he falls on de flo', an' he gits up doin' a war dance, an' a-suckin' his thumb, an' a-sayin' things dat ain't becomin' in no Christian man whut's a elder in de chu'ch. An' I finishes sewin' on de button, an' 'bout de time dat de

sore gits out of his finger he commences to brag 'bout how much he knows 'bout sewin', an' how he always sews on his own buttons."

"Whut you say, Sis Mirandy," says Sis Hannah Jane, "is de ve'y spit an' image of de way my husban' acts on dem lak occasions. Dat's why dey's gwine to teach dem college boys how to sew, so dey can wrastle wid deir own buttons widout losin' deir grip on deir religion. Teachin' dem boys dem household tasks, so to speak, sholy is a gran' idee, an' hit gwine to stop a lot of dis heah divorsch evil."

"Wal, I dunno, Sis Hannah Jane," I 'spons, "hit looks lak to me dat hit's mo' calculated to encourage argyment in de fambly circle dan hit is to permote harmony. Seems lak to me dat I can't edzactly see de dove of peace roostin' on de roof-pole of dat house whar de man of de fambly is always a-handin' out advice to his wife 'bout how she should make de chillun's clothes, an' cook de vittels, an' a-tellin' her dat he always double-fell his seams, an' browned his flour for thickening gravy, instid of doin' things de slack way she does 'em.

"I don' know how you be, Sis Hannah Jane,

but ef dere's one thing in dis world dat does rile me an' git my dander up, hit is for anybody to pass any remarks on de way I cooks things; an' ef I wuz married to a man dat wuz always a-tellin' me dat his biscuits was always light, an' his cake never fell, an' dat de way he cooked po'k chops dey des melted in yo' mouth, I lay dat 'bout de second time he done hit, I'd smash all of de dishes over his haid, an' dat dere would be a call for de amberlansh in dat once-happy home.

"No, Sis Hannah Jane, believe me, hit ain't gwine to make for no happy home for de man to know mo' 'bout cookin' dan his wife does. For whut does de Good Book say on dis p'int to men: 'Eat whut is set befo' you, an' ax no questions. An' pass no criticisms.' De grounds in de coffee-pot is been de grounds of mo' dan one divorsch already, an' dey would be mo' ef ev'y man wuz a free-hand cook."

"Dat's de true words, Sis Mirandy," agrees Sis Hannah Jane, "an' mo'over an' lakwise, dere ain't no odder man in de world dat is so set up an' bigoty as de man dat thinks dat he knows how to cook. Lawd, dest let one of de po' things go a-campin' an' cook up some sort

of a mess dat dey can gulp down, becaze dey's dat hongry dat they could eat turnpike rocks, an' tenpenny nails, an' he don't git through braggin' over hit to de las' day of his life. An' when a man does ondertake to cook anything, hit takes all de pots, an' pans, an' spoons, an' cups in de house, an' he wastes enough vittels to run de fambly a week makin' one dish.

"Wal, anyway," goes on Sis Hannah Jane, "hit sho' would be a comfort to have a husban' dat knows when yo' hat is on straight, an' dat you could pass a pleasant evenin' wid discussin' de new styles, an' whedder skirts wuz to be longer or shorter, and sleeves full or skimpy, an' odder topics of burnin' interest to women.

"Mo'over, Sis Mirandy, maybe if men could fin' out by axual pussonal 'sperience dat cookin', an' washin', an' takin' care of babies is a perpetual motion job, an' de hardest wuk on earth, dey would have a little mo' pity for dem whut's wrastlin' wid hit, an' lend deir wives a helpin' han' wid de spring sewin'."

"Shoo, Sis Hannah Jane," says I, "you'se barkin' up de wrong tree, for dere won't be no marryin' when ev'y man is his own cook an'

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seamstress. Dere comes a time in ev'y bachelor's life when he's got a drawer full of socks wid holes in 'em, an' his suspenders pinned on wid safety pins, an' his stomach turns at de thought of boardin'-house cookin', an' den hit is dat de nearest woman snatches him up, an' leads him lak a lamb to de altar. Dat's de way de Lawd delivers a man into our hands; but ef he had a good grip on de needle an' de fryin'-pan, he'd git away from us ev'y time."

"Mebbe so," 'spons Sis Hannah Jane, "but maybe when men learn how to do fancy work, de po' things dat is drove to de lodge to pass de time of a evenin' can stay at home, and enjoy deirselves crochetin', or doin' Battenberg work."

"Wal, Sis Hannah Jane," 'spons I, "I ain't in favor of teachin' men how to cook an' sew, an' make 'em thereby independent of us women. Nawm, we need all de strangle-hold on de weddin'-ring dat we can git, an' ef de time comes when a man don't have to marry to git a cook dat can't give notice and quit, dere's gwine to be a mighty falling off in weddin' bells. But," I says wid a sigh, "I agrees wid you dat hit would be a comfort to be mar-

ried to a man dat could tell you when yo' shu't waist fits in de back, an' whedder yo' skirt hangs straight or slantwise. But beyond dat, hit's money in our pockets to keep men in deir own sacred sphere."

HYPNOTISM OF LOVE

"SIS MIRANDY," says Sis Araminty, whut is one of dese heah peradventure folks dat is always a-tryin' things on de chanst dat dey might somehow wuk by accident, "Sis Mirandy, is you done heard about dat man whut fo' fo' dollars will teach you de secret of how to throw a love conjer on anybody so dat dey will des come an' eat out of yo' hand?"

"Dat I ain't," I 'spons, "an' ef I had done seed him doin' hit, let lone heard of hit, I wouldn't believe hit. I'd know hit was my lyin' eyes dat deceived me."

"You suttenly always is one of dem doubtful Thomisinas," says Sis Araminty sorter peeved lak.

"Dere's meracles an' meracles," I 'spons,

"some of 'em can be wuked, an' some of 'em can't be wuked, an' one of dem things whut nobody ain't got no receipt for makin' is love. Love is angel's food all right. I ain't asputin' dat, but nobody can tell you how to cook hit up, or whut to put in hit, or whut to leave out of hit, or how to keep hit from fallin' flat an' settin' sour on yo' stomach, or how to warm hit up an' make hit tasty again after hit gits sorter cold, an' clammy, an' heavy."

"Maybe so, an' maybe not so," says Sis Araminty, "but, Sis Mirandy, dis man whut advertises dat he will teach you how to cast de love spell on de one of de odder sect dat you's honin' for to ax you to marry him, an' tole back dem husbands an' wives whut is jumped over de fence round de fambly circle, ain't no seventh son of a seventh son dat was bawn in a caul. He's a scientist."

"Dere ain't no science in love," I 'spons, "hit's all luck. Dat's why de gals whut's cut out to make model wives an' mothers never gits a chanst at de job, an' noble young men, who would make any good woman happy, gits tied up wid flibberty-jibberty gals dat thinks dat a wife's whole duty is to grab her hus-

band's wages an' blow hit in on saucepan hats an' fancy shoes befo' he gits a chanst to git a nickel of hit.

"Why, Sis Araminty," I goes on, "ef dere was any science 'bout lovin' de right pusson, or gittin' de right pusson to love you, dat anybody could teach, we'd all be a-livin' in de millennium, an' singin' songs of joy, instid of most of us castin' one wishful eye on Reno, an' one of dem short-order divorsches dat you reads about."

"Dat's des de pint," 'sclaims Sis Araminty, "dis perfessor dat I's a-tellin' you 'bout says dat fo' de small sum of fo' dollars he can teach wives how to keep deir husbands' affection always at de bilin'-point, lak hit was in de days of cou'tship, instid of lettin' hit simmer down to de lukewarm state lak hit mostly does 'bout de time a wife ceases to be a lady-love an' begins to be des a cook, an' to take mo' interest in bein' comfortable dan she does in lookin' lak a livin' picture. Fo' dollars is a mighty little sum for all of dat, Sis Mirandy, an' as for me I'd ruther retain my husband's love by puttin' a conjer on him dan by doin' widout pie for dinner."

"Huh," I 'sclaims, "easy come, easy go! Ef you wants to fling away de money you done make by bendin' over de washtub on dat foolishness, hit's yo' funeral an' not mine." An' den I rocked back an' forth in my chair in dat discontemptuous way dat we all does when we hands out good advice to folks dat won't take hit.

"Sis Mirandy," axes Sis Araminty, "ain't you got no faith whatsomever in dis heah love-hypnotism business?"

"Sho' I believes in hit," I 'spons. "Love ain't nothin' else but hypnotism, but you don't cast no conjer on anybody else. You puts hit on yo'self, an' as long as hit wuks on yo' own system you is happy an' saterfied, an' de minute somebody breaks de spell on you an' you wakes up, you is mis'able.

"You is always hearin' men an' women talkin' 'bout how de ones dat dey married changed after marriage. Hit ain't true. De ones dat is changed is de ones dat done hypnotized deirselves into thinkin' dat some po', onery, ev'y-day sort of a man or woman was a hero of romance, or a pin-feathered angel, an' when dey come to an' see deir husbands an'

wives as dey really was, an' as dey always had been, why dey didn't have de nerve to stand hit.

"Why, Sis Araminty," I goes on, "do you suppose dat dere would ever be an odder wedding ef we didn't conjer ourselves into believin' dat de pusson we marries is whut we want 'em to be instid of whut dey is? Nawm, we marries our dreams instid of real flesh an' blood folks.

"Ev'y gal thinks dat she'd lak to marry a man 'bout seven feet high, wid a chest-measure lak a giant, an' somebody dat would be hard an' cold to all de balance of de worl', but lak putty in her hands, an' dat won't ask nothin' else in life, after he gits married, but des de privilege of tellin' her how beautiful she is.

"An' pretty soon de gal meets up wid a little man dat's 'bout de size of a shrivelled peanut, an' dat's so timid dat he jumps when you speak to him sudden, an' dat ain't got no mo' highfallutin' love talk in him dan dere is in a ham sandwich, an' de gal looks at him, an' looks at him until he begins to grow, an' git a halo 'bout him ontel he seems to her des de prezact image of dat big, fine-lookin' hero of

romance dat she always thought she would git for a husband, an' she marries him on dat flat-form. But she done conjered herself. De man ain't had no part in castin' de spell on her.

"An' hit's de same way wid men. De men dat has got de most shiftless an' no-'count wives is always a-braggin' on dem instid of lambastin' dem. Hit's becaze dem men is done figured out de kind of wives dey wanted, an' den dey done dress deir wives up in de kind of virtues dey wanted 'em to have, an' dey ain't found out de wives ain't got 'em.

"An' dat's de reason, Sis Araminty, dat I don't never call a wife's or husband's attention to de faults of de partners of deir bosoms, for des as long as a woman thinks dat her husband is so good lookin' dat ev'y odder woman would take him away from her ef she could, why hit's des as good as de real thing to her. An' des as long as a man believes he drawed a cross betwixt a Venus an' Hetty Green an' a cook-book in de matermonial lottery, why he des goes 'bout in a tranch of bliss, an' you can't pry him away from his own fireside.

"Nawm, you don't catch me wakin' nobody

up, an' when women babbles along to me 'bout how wise an' great, an' handsome deir husbands is, an' when husbands brags to me 'bout how deir wives is de greatest managers dat ever was, an' can make biscuits dat des melts in deir mouths, I des pats 'em on de back, an' tries to shoo 'em back to sleep again, for married folks is only happy as long as dey can keep deirselves hypnotized into thinkin' whut dey wants to think."

"Sis Mirandy," says Sis Araminty, "do you reckon dat our husbands sees us still as young, an' slim, an' spry, lak we was when dey picked us out for wives, or do dey see us as we is now, ole an' fat an' heavy footed?"

"Sis Araminty," I 'spons, "hit's my opinion dat a man don't ever take a second look at his wife after he gits married to her. An' dat's Gord's mercy to women. An' anyway Ike's a heavy sleeper, so I trusses for de best."

THE HAPPINESS CULT

De odder night Sis Luellen, whut is one of dese heah women whut is always displayin' on deir pusson de latest wrinkle in clothes, an' religion, drapped into my house, an' she set up all de evenin' a-grinnin' lak a possum, dough whut call anybody has got to wear dat oh-be-joyful look wid de price of po'k chops a-soarin' up higher an' higher ev'y day, beats me.

"Well, Sis Luellen," says I when I couldn't stand no longer lookin' at her loopin' up her mouth over her new set of sto' teeth, "hit looks lak to me dat you is mighty pleased 'bout somethin'. Is you done come into a fortune, or is you heard dat de Lawd has done

took yo' ma-in-law, or is any odder good luck done come yo' way?"

"Oh, no," 'spons Sis Luellen, "ev'ything is jes' rockin' along de same ole way wid me. De change is in me. I'se done jined de Glorianna Sciety."

"De who?" I axes.

"De Glorianna Sciety," says Sis Luellen.

"An' how does you promulgate de wharforeness of dat?" I inquires.

"Oh," says Sis Luellen, a-gittin' another grip on her grin, "de Glorianna Sciety is organized for de puppose of permotin' happiness, an' de members take a pledge to always keep a-smilin', no matter how much dey feels lak cryin'.

"Lakwise we stands on de flatform dat ev'ything is all right whedder hit's wrong or not, an' dat ef you des keep on a-smilin' long enough you'll git something to smile 'bout at last. Oh, de Glorianna Sciety suttenly is a grand Sciety, Sis Mirandy, an' you had orter jine hit."

"Not me," 'spons I, "for I don't take no stock in dat make-believe happiness doctrine. When you hears ole Mirandy gittin' up an'

lettin' out any hallelulah hollers, you jes' write it down in yo' little book dat she's got somethin' to shout over. She ain't wastin' no steam on pertendin' dat she's done drawed a prize in de lottery when all dat she's got is a blank.

"Furdermo'," I goes on, "ef dere's anything in dis world dat gits on my nerves an' makes me tired, hit's dese people dat makes a business of bein' cheerful an' gay, an' who puts on deir smiles in de mawnin', des lak dey pins on deir false hair, an' wears 'em all day no matter whut happens. Deir laugh is des 'bout as much lak de real thing as dis heah mock duck dat I makes out of bread-crums an' veal trimmings is lak a fo'-dollar teal quacker.

"Yassum, Sis Luellen, I reckon 'bout de saddest thing dis side of a funeral is one of dese heah perfessional rays of sunshine. I used to know one of 'em once named Sis Patience, an' Sis Patience was one of dese sway-back women dat look lak she done got all de odds an' ends of misery an' bad luck dat was lef' over when odder folks got deir share of tribulations. Sis Patience was married to a no-account, triflin' man dat was bawn too

tired to wuk, so she had to suppo't him. An' she had de rheumatics in her knees, an' de dyspepsia in her stomach, an' de misery in her haid, an' twins, an' triplets, an' odder afflictions.

"Yassum, she suttenly was travellin' through de low grounds of trials an' tribulations, but instid of settin' down and sheddin' barrels of tears an' complainin' 'bout her lot, she went 'bout smilin' until hit made yo' face ache to look at her. I'd go over to her house an' dere would be Sis Patience at de washtub wid her jaws tied up wid de neuralgy, but a-smilin' along lak she had on a flower bonnet an' was a-startin' out to a picnic.

"Maybe Br'er Amos would come home dat tanked up wid red-eye he had to make fo' passes at hit befo' he could hit de do', but Sis Patience would smile at him des lak he was a lover bringin' home a bouquet an' his pay envelope, instid of a jag. Maybe de twinses would be fightin' all over de flo' an' a-yowlin' lak a pack of catamounts, but Sis Patience would keep on a-smilin' at dem lak dey was angel chillun named Percy.

"An' she'd smile, an' smile, an' smile, ontel

she'd git me dat crazy a-lookin' at dat grin dat wouldn't come off dat I felt lak I was goin' crazy."

"But, Sis Mirandy," 'sclaims Sis Luellen, "but shorely you believes dat hit is a woman's place to be cheerful in her fambly, an' to meet her husband wid a glad, sweet smile when he comes home?"

"Fur from it," 'spons I; "sometime hit's a wife's duty to meet her husband wid a glad, sweet smile, an' sometimes hit's her duty to meet him wid a club, or a flatiron, whichever she is handiest wid. Whedder hit's a wife's business to smile or not depends on whedder her husband gives her anything to smile 'bout. Ef my old man Ike wants me to be Little Sunshine aroun' de house, he's got to come acrost.

"Yassum, Sis Luellen, you listen to me, for I'se a-givin' you de true words, dis heah cheerfulness business sounds mighty good to listen to, but you take hit from me, de women whut has got husbands dat walks in de straight an' narrow path, an' chillun dat behaves deirselves, is women dat bears mo' resemblance to a toranado dan dey does to a ray of sunshine. Folks gits out of de way of a hurricane, but

dey kind of dilly-dallies along wid a mild spring mawnin', an' dat's de way dey treats a woman. De woman dat's got influence in her own home is de one dat has got a frown lak a thunder-cloud, an' a tongue like a streak of lightenin', not one of dese heah pussy-cat smilers dat sets up an' grins, no matter how folks rubs her fur de wrong way."

"But think whut a grand place de world would be ef we all went 'bout smilin'," says Sis Luellen.

"Humph," 'spons I, "I specs dat when de good Lawd made de sunshine, He knowed whut He was 'bout, an' when He made de rain an' de storm He lakwise knowed whut He was 'bout, an' dat He wouldn't have mixed 'em up, wid sunshine after rain, an' rain after sunshine, widout dat had been de bes' way to fix hit. Lakwise, I'se also of de opinion dat He expects us to know when we are happy, an' to know when we are miserable, an' not to be fools enough to make out dat we'se havin' de time of our lives when we'se got a jumpin' toothache, an' dat we enjoys performin' on a washtub, an' is flattered to death when we overhears somebody say dat we'se gittin' ole

an' fat, an' our new hat is ten yeahs too young for us.

"Why, Sis Luellen, de biggest consolation dat dere is in trouble is bein' able to lift up our voices, an' weep, an' lament, des lak hit takes de pain away when you'se sick, ef you can groan aloud, but ef you keeps up all of dat smilin' business an' makes out you is enjoyin' yourself when you'se sick, you ain't got no comfort left in yo' afflictions.

"Yassum, dere's a time to be glad, an' a time to be sad, an' a time to be mad, an' dere ain't no sense in mixin' 'em up. As for me, I likes to laugh as well as de next one, but I want somethin' to laugh 'bout. I wants somethin' inside of me dat tickles my funny-bone, an' sets de bells ringin' in my heart, an' makes all de world bright, an' sunshiny, an' me feelin' lak a painted balloon a-sailin' over sparklin' water. Dat's de way I wants to feel when I laugh. I don't want to give out one of dese heah imitation, near-laughs dat you keep on tap, an' dat you turns on to keep from turnin' on de tear tap.

"Nawm, I wants to be glad when I'm glad, an' miserable when I'm miserable, an' to keep

my fambly dodgin' betwixt de cyclon-cellar an' de sun-parlor. For dat way you keeps a man guessin'. An' as long as you've got a man guessin' you'se got him. You hear me!"

EUGENICS

"SIS MIRANDY," says Sis Violet to me de odder day when she drapped over to my house to set a while an' pass de time of day, "Sis Mirandy, whut do you think 'bout dis heah eugenics dat Br'er Johnsing promulgates so much 'bout?"

"Eugeny who?" I axed. "I disremembers meetin' de lady, but ef Br'er Johnsing is a-takin' any interest in her, I bet she ain't no better dan she ought to be, whoever she is."

"Eugenics ain't no female pusson," 'spons Sis Violet, "hit's a cause."

"Whut sort of a cause?" I inquires. "One of dese heah causes whut you passes aroun' de hat for, or one of dem causes dat you puts on airs 'bout becaze hit's toney to believe in hit?"

"Well, I don't edzactly onderstand de wharforeness an' de whereasness of hit myself," says Sis Violet, "but as near is I can make out, hit's havin' chillun by a new-fangled cut-paper pattern, instid of in de ole hit-or-miss way."

"De lan' sake, you don't say so!" 'sclaims I. "But dat's takin' de Lawd's wuk out of His hands."

"Humph," 'spons Sis Violet, "Sis Mirandy, you sholy is behind de times, for hit's a mighty pin-haided pusson in dese days dat don't think dat dey can manage things better dan de Good Master kin."

"Babies is de Lawd's wuk," says I, "an' He sends 'em as He pleases, for how else is hit dat po' folks always gits de twinses an' triplets, whilst rich folks has to go roun' to de orphan asylum an' buy 'em a second-hand infant?"

"Dat's whut eugenics is fur," 'spons Sis Violet; "hit's to regulate de baby-supply so dat dem whut can't feed whut dey has got, won't be gittin' anodder little boarder ev'y yeah, an' so dat dem whut's got whole sets of gold spoons to put in de mouths of deir babies when dey's born will have de mouths to put

'em in. Mo'over, eugenics is givin' de chillun a square deal, an' hit's lettin' babies pick out deir pas an' deir mas befo' dey is born, an' dat way gittin' de kind dey's proud to be kin to, instid of havin' to take de kind of parients dat is wisht on 'em."

"De Lawsy mussy! You don't say so," I cries out. "How I wisht dat eugeny had been a-wukin' when I was a baby. I know who I'd 'a' picked out for a pa. Hit would have been Mister Rockinfeller, an' den I'd 'a' been a-swimmin' along in seas of kerosene instid of wrastlin' aroun' to find anodder quarter to drap in de gas-meter."

"Yes," goes on Sis Violet, "hit seems lak we done been too casual, so to speak, in dis heah baby business. We ain't had no plan. We just took 'em as dey come, an' was thankful when dey had de right number of legs an' arms, an' somethin' dat looked lak hit might look lak a face instid of a cream cheese when hit got a little older. But we don't take dem chances on nothin' else. When you wants watermillions, you plants watermillions. When you wants potatoes, you plants potatoes. When you raises hawgs, you raises

hawgs, an' likewise wid chickens, but when you starts out to raise a fambly, you ain't got no mo' idee of whut you're gwine to turn out dan a rabbit has. Dar's whar eugenics steps in an' shows you how to have a set of chillun dat you can brag on to de neighbors."

"Oh, I don't know," I 'spons, "I done seen some mighty slip-ups wid folks dat thought dat dey were smart enough to settle dis heah chile proposition out of deir own haids. I disremembers ef I ever seed a young mother tie up all her baby-clothes wid pink ribbon, an' pick out George Washington for a name becaze she had determined to have a boy, dat hit didn't turn out to be a gal. Nor is I ever seen anybody start out to raise up a chile to be a preacher dat he didn't turn out a hoodlum. Ev'y baby is a prize package, an' you don't know whut hit's gwine to be nor whut's in hit ontel you gits hit. An' furdermo' de parients ain't got no say-so 'bout whut dey are gittin'. Dat's whut makes chillun so interestin'. Dey keeps you guessin'."

"Maybe dey used to be dat way, Sis Mirandy," says Sis Violet, "but dat was befo' dey invented dis heah eugenics whut I's a-tell-

in' you 'bout. Now you picks out your chillun's looks, an' deir size, an' de kind of sense dey is got, des lak you picks out de hat, an' de dress dat's most becomingest to you, an' suits yo' style, in de dry-goods store."

"How you do dat?" I axes wid my mouth wide open, for I suttenly was tooken on de surprise by dis heah news.

"Why," 'spons Sis Violet, "hit's jest as easy as fallin' off a log. All you got to do is to pick out yo' chillun's pa, or ma, an' grandpas an' grandmas, an' great-grandpas an' great-grandmas, an' great-great-grandpas an' great-great-grandmas, an' great-great-great-grandmas an' pas, and great-great-great-great-grandpas an' mas, an' lakwise deir uncles an' aunts in de same way, a-tracin' back de blood to kingdom come, an' seein' dat none of 'em ain't got no disease, nor peculiarity, nor cussedness dat you wouldn't lak for yo' precious darling baby to have. An' dar you is!"

"Yassum, I specs you would be, an' dat chile dat was de lineal descendant of all dem puffect people sholy would be a wonder, but don't you think dat he, or she, or it, would be mighty far apart, an' few of 'em?" I inquires.

"Maybe so," 'spons Sis Violet, "but dat's de recipe for havin' a eugenic baby. Follow de rule, an' you can't fail."

"Well," 'spons I, "I don't know dat I takes much stock in dat doctrine. Hit looks to me lak hit was got up by ole maids an' ole bachelors whut ain't had much 'sperience in de baby line, an' don't know nothin' at all 'bout de inwardness of matermony an' de fambly-circle. Nawm, I don't hold none wid dat doctrine 'bout seein' dat all yo' chillun's kin-folks on deir pa's side is been good-lookin', an' always set up in de amen-corner at chu'ch. Nawm, for ev'y mother of a fambly knows dat ef dere is one consolation left to her in de world, hit is layin' all of her chillun's faults an' shortcomings onto deir pa's folks.

"Now, when people flings bouquets at my Ma'y Jane an' says dat she suttenly is de spryest gal, wid de finest figger, an' de grandest walk of any gal on our block, I des ups an' says dat hit ain't no wonder, for Ma'y Jane is des de sp'it an' image of my fambly. But when de neighbors say dat Ma'y Jane sholy is afraid of wuk, an' ain't on speakin' terms wid de cook-stove, an' dat de way dat she runs

after dat no-'count loafer Si Jones is a scandal, I says dat Ma'y Jane takes after her pa's sister Irene, an' dat hit don't look lak she's got a drop of my blood in her body. Yassum, dis heah eugeny is gwine take away one of de greatest comforts of parients ef dey can't lay all of deir chillun's shortcomings on de kind of kin-folks dey had on de odder side of de house.

"An' hit's kind of hard on de chillun, too, for hit don't give dem no excuse for deir sins an' deir failures. Yassum, I guess heredity is de most overworked excuse, goin' an' comin', in de world, an' ef you do away wid dat, hit sholy is gwine to be a depravity to a lot of folks.

"When I goes to see Sis Malviny an' finds her settin' aroun' in a dirty caliker wrapper wid de bed onmade, an' de dishes piled up in de sink, does Sis Malviny hang her haid in shame becaze she's triflin' an' no 'count? Nawm. She say dat she takes after her ma, whut de sight of a broom always gives de palpitations of de heart, an' dat she's des lak her ma's folks whut never could abide de sight of a washtub. Now whut I want to know is how

dem po' little eugeny chillun is gwine to do when dey can't lay deir failings on deir parients, for deir parients was done hand picked for 'em wid such care dat dey was all models of virtue.

"An' furdermo'," I continues, "maybe I'd think mo' of dis heah theory 'bout tellin' whut a chile would be by de kind of parients it has ef I hadn't seen de way hit wuks backward. Des cast yo' eye aroun', an' you'll take notice dat dem couples dat is so ugly dat dey'd stop de clock most generally has de best-lookin' chillun, an' dem couples whut would take prizes in a beauty-show is de parients of little measly runts dat looks lak somethin' dat de cat brought in. An' mo' dan dat, wharever you finds a triflin' ma you'll find gals dat knows how to turn deir hands to any kind of wuk, an' most of de men dat is drawin' down fat pay an' bossin' de gang whar dey wuks is de sons of fathers dat was dat triflin' dat dey never could pay de rent or keep po'k-chops in de skillet. Whilst de sons an' daughters of hustlin' parients ain't got de energy to do nothin' harder dan go shoppin' an' hold up de table at de poolroom.

"Yassum, hit's funny, but hit's true dat our chillun gits whut we ain't got from us jes' as often as dey inherits whut we is got. An' dat's why I ain't runnin' off after dis heah eugeny dat you talks 'bout. Mo'over, de Lawd has been makin' babies widout any advice from us for a mighty long time, an' as for me—I's willing to let Him keep on wid de job."

ON KEEPING YOUNG

De odder day I drapped by Sis Hannah Jane's house, an' lo an' behole, de fust thing dat I set my eyeballs on when I opened de do' was Sis Hannah Jane fust jumpin' over de melojum stool, den she would hist one foot up an' kick at de wall wid hit, an' den she would flop down on de flo' an' roll over, an' over, de whilst her face wo' an expression of patient sufferin'.

Now Sis Hannah Jane is a large pussonable lady, lak I is, whut tilts de scale roun' 'bout de two hundred pound mark, an' is got a figger lak a bundle a woman wrapped up an' is had so many birthdays dat she done lost de count of 'em, an' hopes odder folks has, too.

Mo'over she is a mother in Israel, an' de vice-presiden' of de Daughters of Zion an' leads de female prayer meetin', an' has got odder entitlements to de respect of de community, an' so when I see her actin' up in dat curis manner I sholy was dat flabbergasted dat you could 'a' knocked me down wid a fedder.

Fust I done thought she done los' her mind, an' den I thought dat she sho was havin' fits, an' whilst I was a-standin' in de do' tryin' to make up my mind whedder to call de police, or run for a doctor, Sis Hannah Jane seen me, an' she riz up, an' says lak dere warn't nothin' de matter:

"Mawnin', Sis Mirandy, how does you segasuate dis mawnin'?"

"Thank you kindly, Sis Hannah Jane," I 'spons. "I'se enjoyin' po' health, as usual, but I was afeard from dem goin's on I seed you havin' dat you was sudden tooken wid some of dese heah new-fangled diseases, whut dey tells me is awful."

"Nawm," she says, "dere ain't nothin' de matter wid me. You jest ketched me doin' my exercises."

"Exercises!" 'sclaims I, "de lan' sakes, woman, don't you git enough exercise a-cookin' an' a-scrubbin', an' a-sewin', an' a-cleanin' up after yo' fambly?"

"Dat's wuk, Sis Mirandy," she 'spons; "dese heah are beauty exercises, an' de wharfo'ness of 'em am to keep you young."

"Huh," says I, "I lay dat hit'll tak mo' dan jumpin' over a stool, or havin' spasms on de flo', to stop de clock for any of us."

"Hit is kine of discouragin', Sis Mirandy," agrees Sis Hannah Jane in a tired sort of way, "an' dere is times when I wisht dat I dast be jest as ole as I is, but all of de odder women is a-spendin' all of deir money an' strength on tryin' to keep young, an' I got to trail along wid 'em."

"De mo' idjit, you," says I, "becaze keepin' young is one of de things dat can't be did, Sis Hannah Jane, an' de only pusson dat a woman fools when she pretends to be a pullet after she is a stringy old hen is herself."

"Hit's a terrible thing for a woman to grow ole, Sis Mirandy," sighs Sis Hannah Jane.

"De cat's foot," says I, "a woman never

knows whut real happiness an' comfort means ontil she is fifty years ole, an' don't care who knows hit, an' has done made up her mine dat no man ain't gwine to turn roun' an' look at her when she passes him on de street! Den she can let out her corset strings, an' eat whut she laks, an' wear shoes big enough for her feet, an' git some pleasure out of livin'. Dat's de kine of a prize package dat age is, Sis Hannah Jane, ef a woman has got sense enough to retch out her han', an' take hit, an' be grateful dat she's got hit, instid of tryin' to dodge hit.

"But hit sho am a rocky road, an' hard to travel ef you is tryin' to put up a bluff, an' make folks thinks dat you is sixteen instid of sixty. My Lawd, but hit makes me des slosh over wid sympathy, when I sees dem ole grandmas dat's paintin' roses on de cheeks whut ain't had a natchel one on 'em for thuty years, an' dat fills up all of deir wrinkles wid rice powder, an' dyes deir hair, an' acts young an' skittish when deir po' ole bones is full of de misery of rheumatics.

"Believe me, Sis Hannah Jane, dem ole whited sepulchers is missin' de best part of

life. Dey's missin' de peace, an' de comfort, an' de respect of age."

"But, Sis Mirandy," axes Sis Hannah Jane, "ef a woman don't keep young how is she gwine to retain her husband's love, seein' as how de older a man gits de mo' his taste runs to brilers?"

"Sis Hannah Jane," 'spons I, "ef by de time you has been married to a man thuty-five or forty years he don't love you for somethin' mo' dan yo' age, he don't love you at all, an' dere ain't no use in worryin' 'bout holdin' him. He's done jumped de bars an' gone out to hunt for squabs so long ago dat hit don't count. Besides, any woman dat thinks dat she can fool a husband into thinkin' dat she's young when she is ole, has got dat little sense dat she ought to have her haid operated on for de sillies.

"When a man loves his wife when she's fifty, Sis Hannah Jane, hit's becaze she's dest part of him, an' becaze she's wuked side by side wid him endurin' all de years, an' becaze he's knowed dat no matter ef all de world turned aginst him she'd be right at his back wid her arms open to take him home in 'em,

an' her breast waitin' for him to pillar his haid on hit; an' hit's becaze he likes de way she fries po'k chops an' makes biscuits, an' hit's becaze hit always seems to him dat dere ain't no laugh so jolly as hers, an' she makes sunshine when she comes into a room, an' hit's becaze of de cradles dey has bent over togedder, an' de little coffins dey has wept over, an' de sick beds dey has watched over when neider one dast tell de odder whut dey feared. Hit's for de good times an' de bad times dey has been through togedder, Sis Hannah Jane, dat makes a man think his ole wife is de only woman in de world. But hit ain't becaze she done fooled him into thinkin' dat she's done lost thuty years of her age, an' is young an' slim instid of bein' middle-aged an' fat."

"Don't you wisht dat you was young agin, Sis Mirandy?" axes Sis Hannah Jane.

"Dat I don't," 'spons I, "I'se havin' a lot better time now dan I did den. Hit's taken me fifty years to learn how to be happy. Why, I remembers when I was a gal dat when a rain would come up so dat I couldn't go to de picnic dat I had planned for, I'd dest set

down an' shed a barrel of tears, an' feel dat life was dat full of disappointment dat I had jest as well give up an' die.

"But 'spose somethin' happens now so dat I can't do de thing I wants to do, why, I jest shrugs my shoulders, an' don't give hit anodder thought, for I done found out dat ef I can't do one thing dat I'd lak, I can do somethin' else dat may be I lak better, an' dat, anyway, dere ain't nothin' dat's wuth worryin' 'bout. An' hit pays to be ole, Sis Hannah Jane, dest to have got dat piece of information. Dat's why you hardly ever see a ole pusson cry. Hit's de young dat sheds all de tears. An' for anodder thing, Sis Hannah Jane, when you'se young, you'se always got to be improvin' yo'self, but when you'se ole you can dest amuse yo'self. Thank Gawd, I done been to see all dem plays whut elervates de mind, an' now I can go wid a clar conscience to see dem whut makes me laugh."

"Sis Mirandy," axes Sis Hannah Jane, "don't you believe dat hit's de duty of people when dey begins to git ole to keep on a studyin', tryin' to improve deir minds lak dem noble folkses whut Bro' Jinkins tells 'bout dat

learned furrin langwidges after dey was eighty?"

"Nawm, dat I don't," 'spons I. "Sis Hannah Jane," says I, "after you has got up at five o'clock in de mawnin' an' cooked breakfast, an' got you' ole man off to wuk, an' washed an' dressed de chillun an' sent 'em to school, an' den turned in an' done a hard day's washin' beside throwin' in cookin' dinner an' supper an' doin' a lot of darnin' an' patchin', when de twilight comes don't you think dat you'se got a right to set down, easy an' quiet, an' take things comfortable?"

"Dat I does," 'spons Sis Hannah Jane.

"Well," says I, "dat's de way dat I looks at de time of life from fifty on for a woman. She's done done her day's wuk in raisin' her fambly, an' ef she's got de sense dat Gawd promised a fishin' worm, she don't worry herself no mo' 'bout keepin' young, nor keepin' up wid de times, nor nothin'. She dest sets down in de twilight of life an' takes things easy, an' enjoys herself."

"Den whut's de matter wid all of dese heah folks tryin' to teach women how to keep young?" axes Sis Hannah Jane.

"Dey's false prophets," 'spons I. "Whut women need is not somebody to teach 'em how to keep young, but somebody to teach 'em how to grow ole."

LONG ENGAGEMENTS

"De odder night Gladys Maude Geraldine come 'round to my house wid dat I-done-hit look on her face dat a woman never wears ceptin' when she hooks her first beau an' looks at her first baby, an' befo' she is done tackled puttin' up wid de cantankerousness of a husban' or walkin' de colic.

"'Rejoice wid me, Sis Mirandy,' says she, 'for I'se done got my glory ticket.'

"'Hump,' 'spons I, 'by dem tokens I takes hit dat Si Johnsing has done come through an' popped de question, at last.'

"'Yassum,' says Gladys Maude Geraldine, 'he done axed me to marry him, an' we'se engaged.'

"'Well,' 'spons I, 'ev'ybody has got a right to try matermony once, anyhow, des for luck. Sometimes you gits fun out of hit, an' sometimes you gits trouble out of hit, but, anyway, hit saves you from being a ole maid, an' gives you a run for yo' money, an' so I don't discourage none of dem from enterin' de holy estate whut has got sportin' blood an' enjoys takin' foolhardy risks. When is de happy event comin' off, so I can git me one of dese heah new Bulgin' dresses to wear—for I lays to shake a foot at yo' weddin'?'

"'Oh,' says Gladys Maude Geraldine, 'Si ain't got no job, an' we ain't got no money to git married on, an' we'se got to wait ontil he makes his fortune—or leastways gits enough money to pay de rent an' buy a few po'k chops.'

"'De cat's foot!' sclaims I. 'You don't mean to tell me, Gladys Maude Geraldine, dat you'se gone an' been fool enough to tie yo'self up wid one of dese heah O-promise-me fellers dat ain't got nothin' but broken doses of soft talk to offer a woman, whilst she's wearin' herself out a-waitin' for him to come 'roun' an' make good? De Lawd knows hit's bad enough to have to stick to a man after you is married

to him, but a woman's a plum idiot to hang on to one, for mo' dan six months at a time, befo' she's married to him. You take ole Mirandy's advice, chile, an' bust dat engagement! In courtin' let yo' motto be, "put up, or shut up."'

"'Dat I won't,' 'spons Gladys Maude Geraldine, 'for in de fust place, hit is hard enough to catch a man, anyway, dese days, an' in de second place, I thinks dat dere's nothin' so romantical as a long engagement. De bond between a engaged couple is a silken cord dat binds two lovin' hearts togedder.'

"'Maybe so,' says I, 'but I's done took notice dat hit is a bond dat is mighty apt to git busted ef you stretches hit out far. Of course, ev'ybody to deir tastes, but ef I was to give a man a option on me, hit would have to have a time limit on hit.'

"'Why, Sis Mirandy! Don't you believe in a long engagement?' axes Gladys Maude Geraldine.

"'Dat I don't!' I 'spons. 'I done seed too many engagements kind of fizzle out, an' de bride left 'bout a mile from de chu'ch. A engagement is lak a omelet—you got to serve hit

up quick an' hot, or hit'll fall flat an' git flabby.

"'When a man is fust engaged he's down on his knees a-beggin' an' emplorin' de gal to marry him. After a while he ain't so anxious 'bout hit, nor in so much of a hurry, an' by de time two or three yeahs go by, he begins to think 'bout de weddin'-day lak he does 'bout de time when a mortgage is gwine to be foreclosed.

"'No, daughter,' I goes on, 'don't you never tangle yo'self up in de rope of a long engagement, for hit cuts off hope of odder men dat want to marry you, an' don't give you no lien on de man whut is at de odder end of de string. Hit's all on one side—dat's whut hit is!

"'Besides a gal what is bound up in one of dese heah day-of-judgment engagements ain't neither married nor single. She's got all de trouble of a husban' widout de benefit of his money, or de right to go through his clothes for small change, or de privilege of sassin' him widout bein' afraid dat he'll take his hat an' leave, an' won't come back no mo'.

"'She's got on a man's collar, an' is

"WIDOUT DE RIGHT TO GO THROUGH HIS CLOTHES FOR SMALL CHANGE"

tagged "tooken" so dat de odder men leaves her on de shelf, yit she ain't got nobody to suppo't her. She ain't got neider husban' nor alimony. Ev'ybody expects her to be faithful to de vows she done plighted to a man whut, mo' dan likely, ain't never comin' back, for I done been to mo' dan one weddin' whar de measly bridegroom didn't show up.

"'Darfore, my chile,' says I, 'ef de man p'ints to a weddin'-day dat is so far off dat you has to look at hit through de telescope, you tell him to call 'round again when he's able to talk business. Dat'll hustle him up an' keep de do' of hope open for some odder man whut maybe is got de price of a weddin' ring in his pocket.'

"'But,' says Gladys Maude Geraldine, 'ef folks ain't engaged a long time how is dey gwine to find out 'bout each odder's curis peculiarities?'

"'Don't you worry 'bout dat,' 'spons I, 'you'se got plenty of time to do dat after you is married.

"'Besides hit is dangerous! Ef ev'y woman found out befo' she was married to a man how cranky, an' onreasonable, an' can-

tankerous he was, an' ef ev'y man got a inkling on de safe side of de altar, of how many different ways a woman could be aggrefrettin', dere wouldn't be no mo' weddings. Nobody wouldn't be crazy enough to go up against such a proposition.

"'You listen to me, daughter. Don't you never let no man get well enough acquainted wid you befo' you is married to him to find out dat yo' temper is hung on a hair trigger, an' dat yo' maw does de cookin', an' dat yo' hair is des yours by right of purchase.

"'An' don't you go probin' into whedder a man is de gran' an' noble bein' dat he lets on he is, or find out whedder he knows hit all, lak he sets up to do. I knowed a gal once dat got to investigatin' her sweetheart's character, an' hit broke off de match.'

"'But you got to find out 'bout a man's faults after you marries him, an' he's sho to discover yo's,' 'spons Gladys Geraldine, 'so hit looks lak to me dat hit would be better to do hit while you's engaged instid of after de knot is tied.'

"'Of course, of course,' says I, 'but after you're married you'se got each odder for bet-

ter or worse, an' we'se all so self-saterfied dat de very fact dat a thing is ours makes hit seem better.

"'Mo'over, hit is a kind of cheerful amusement to pick faults in de one you is married to, an' reflect on how much better you is dan dey is. Don't you worry 'bout dat, honey; when you gits married, an' de partner of yo' bosom begins to knock you for de way you cooks, or for spendin' de rent money on a pill-box hat, you'll find hit mighty comfortable to be able to reach up in de fambly skeleton closet, an' pull out a bunch of his shortcomings dat will make you look lak a long-sufferin' saint. Nobody but a ole maid wants to marry a perfect man.'

"'How long do you think dat an engagement orter last?' axes Gladys Maude Geraldine.

"'Long enough for a man an' woman to git acquainted, an' find out whether dey both eats onions, an' laks de same kin' of pie, but not long enough to git familious wid each odder's faults. You want to pull off an engagement befo' de down is off de peach, an' de platin' is wore off de gold brick.'

"'I'd wait for Si a thousand yeahs,' says Gladys Maude Geraldine.

"'Mebbe you'll have to,' says I, 'for men is got a mighty habit of forgettin' to keep a long engagement, especially after hit is kinder wo' a woman down to skin an' bones, an' a raspy disposition—an' dat's whut ginerally happens to dese heah almost-widows.'"

THE AMENITIES OF MATRIMONY

"Is you heared," asked Mirandy, "dat Sis Araminty an' Br'er Hennery, whut is been united in de holy bonds of matermony for thutty yeahs, is gwine to git a divorsch?

"Yassum, dat's so. Dem two ole wuk-horses dat's been a-joggin' along side by side for all dat long time widout mo' dan a shove now an' den at each odder, when one s'picioned dat de odder wasn't pullin' a fair share of de load, is done kick over de traces at last, an' dey done been to a lawyer whut's gwine to git 'em one of dese heah new kind of divorsches wid alldermoney.

"Yassum, an' Sis Araminty's gwine to git

$1.50 a week out of Br'er Hennery, an' Br'er Hennery is gwine to have to cook for hisself, an' patch his own breeches—an' dem two whut is well off an' comfortable togedder is gwine to be po' an' low sperrited an' miserable apart.

"Just as soon as I heared 'bout hit I put on my bonnet an' I went over to see 'em, for whilst I don't look none lak de Dove of Peace, I sholy has poured ile on de troubled waters many a time befo' now.

"Wellum, when I got to deir house, I found Sis Araminty a-packin' up her Risin' Sun an' Log Cabin quilts, an' a-singin' at de top of her voice lak a woman does when she's mad clean through to de back-bone, whilst Br'er Hennery was a-settin' outside de do', a-whittlin', an' tryin' to look lak he was a rooster just a-waitin' for de clock to strike so he could hop on de fence an' crow.

"'Whut's dis heah scandalous tale I heared 'bout you an' Sis Araminty bustin' through de bonds of wedlock dat you done took for better or for wuss?' I axes him.

"'Dere's too much wuss in hit, an' not enough better to suit my taste,' 'spons Sis

'Araminty, who done come out to take a hand in de conversation.

"'I knows when I's got enough of a thing,' puts in Br'er Hennery, 'an' I sholy has got my fill of matermony. I may be a goat, but I ain't no pig.'

"'Is Br'er Hennery been a-segasuatin' 'roun' wid any of dem spry-lookin' gals in de congregation?' I axes Sis Araminty.

"'Huh,' she 'spons, 'I'd des lak to see him cast his eye on any woman except me!'

"'I specs den dat Br'er Hennery has been a-holdin' out on his pay, which ain't no way for a husban' to do,' I says.

"'He ain't had de chanct,' 'sclaims Sis Araminty, 'for no man ain't got de gumption to handle real money, or ought to be trusted wid de spendin' of hit—so I done took temptation away from Hennery by takin' charge of his pocketbook, an' a-dolin' out to him whut chicken-feed dat I thinks he's entitled to spend.'

"'Humph,' 'spons I, 'hit looks lak to me dat ef whut you says is true, Br'er Hennery is a sort of a pin-feathered angel dat you better freeze on to, instid of tryin' to lose.'

"Den I turns to Br'er Hennery an' I says, 'Maybe Sis Araminty is been a-flirtin' 'roun' wid some probus-lookin' gemman, for I done took notice dat when a woman gits to de age whar she ought to take a back seat she begins to look sorter wishful towards de primrose path.'

"'No, Sis Mirandy,' 'spons Br'er Hennery, 'I ain't a-castin' no asparagus on Araminty's character. Dere ain't no need to, for when a woman is as skinny an' stringy as she is, she don't need no odder certificate of virtue. Dat ain't de reason I's a-gwine to git a divorsch from Araminty. We'se done convoluted an' ascertained dat we ain't soul-mates no mo'."

"'Shoo,' says I, 'ef dat's all, why don't you dest have a good scrap an' made hit up, an' rock along lak you used to? Believe me, hit's a lot easier to stand de temper dat you knows all de kinks of dan hit is to tie up wid a new one dat you is got to find out de sharp edges of by pussonal 'sperience.'

"But dey wouldn't listen to me, an' dey's gwine to git a divorsch, an' make a scandal in de chu'ch, an' ev'ybody is a-wukin' deir

tongues overtime a-makin' up tales about 'em, an' a-wonderin' why dey parted. But I knows whut is de matter wid 'em. Sis Araminty has been a-drivin' Br'er Hennery wid too tight a rein, an' Br'er Hennery done balk. Furdermo' Sis Araminty ain't been saterfied to do de drivin'. She got to show off dat she's got de whip hand, an' when a woman does dat, soon or late, behind her back, or befo' her face, de man slips de bridle an' bolts!

"'Co'se I thinks dat a wife orter manage a husban', becaze men is po', weak, helpless creeters dat ain't got enough probusness to look out for deirselves. Dat's de reason dat de good Gawd made mo' women dan He did men—so dat none of 'em would have a excuse for not gittin' married as often as de occasion is required. Yassum, a woman ought to manage her husband, but she orter do hit on de sly when nobody ain't lookin'. She ain't got no call to hang de breeches out of her front window, so dat all de neighbors can see dat she wears 'em.

"Now Sis Araminty's de kind of a woman dat always sails down de aisle at church wid Br'er Hennery a-trottin' along after her, an'

she says to him, 'set heah, Henery,' an' he sets, an' when dey passes 'roun' de contribution-plate she draps in de money, so ev'ybody can notice dat she totes de purse.

"Mo'over she's always layin' down de law to Br'er Hennery befo' folks, an' a-lettin' ev'ybody know dat she's de boss in deir house, an' de fust finger in deir fambly. Co'se dis makes ev'ybody snigger when dey looks at Br'er Hennery, an' all de men makes fun of him 'bout bein' henpecked, ontel he gits his dander up an' goes home, an' busts up de furniture, an' gives Sis Araminty a black eye jest to prove dat he ain't a mouse an' dat's huccome dey's headed towards de divorsch court!

"Thank Gawd, I's got mo' sense dan to go 'roun' showin' off how I is got de upper hand of my husband, for no matter whut I does an' says to Ike in private, in public I sholy is a meek an' dutiful wife. I always axes his advice befo' folks, an' dat pleases him so dat he don't notice dat I goes along an' does my own way.

"Nawm, I ain't got no sympathy wid Sis Araminty. A woman dat goes 'bout braggin'

dat she's got her husban' on de leash am mighty apt to find out dat he has slipped de collar an' gone off wid some odder woman dat's handy wid de salve, an' dat tells him dat she's skeered of him becaze he's so big, an' strong, an' masterful.

"Yassum, when I hears a woman boastin' dat she handles de money an' buys her husban's clothes, an' dat he doesn't dast enter his own do' widout wipin' his feet on de mat, I begins to listin for de noise dat sounds lak de breakin' up of a home. Furdermo' I's down on dese henpecker ladies becaze dey is bad for de matermonial market. Ev'ytime a man sees anodder man pushing de perambulator, an' followin' along behind his wife whilst she teeters along on spool-heeled shoes, dressed up lak Solomon in all his glory, he des natcherally flies de matermonial coop, an' some gal loses a meal-ticket right den an' dere.

"Yassum, ef so many women didn't make a public exhibition of how dey managed deir husban's dere would be mo' women have husban's to manage. Henpeckin' is one of dem things whut a woman orter do in de privacy of her own home, wid de blinds pulled down.

an' de doors shut, an' de keyhole stopped up. You listen to me! Dat's de true word, I's givin' you!"

THANKSGIVING

"WELL, Sis Mirandy, ma'am," says Sis Malaria to me do odder night, "an' so Thanksgivin' is mos' on us agin."

"De cat's foot! *You don't say so!*" sclaims I, for I suttenly was took on de onsurprise, "don't hit beat all how close togedder Christmuses an' Thanksgivinses come dese times? Looks to me lak dey must have 'em 'bout fo' times a yeah."

"Dat's de true word you is givin' us," 'spons Sis Malaria, "I guess hit's dis heah new-fangled improvement whut dey calls speedin' things up dat makes 'em keep ev'ything on de jump an' de run. Why, when I was young de Christmuses an' de Thanksgivinses were so far apart dat hit looked lak

dey never would come, but now dey des laps over one anodder lak de shingles on de roof."

"Dat's so," I agrees wid her, "I ain't no mo' dan sorter rest up my mind from tryin' to think whut sort of a Christmus gift I'll give to who, befo' I got to start to hantin' de sto's tryin' to find somethin' dat's marked down to thirty-nine cents an' dat'll look lak three dollars an' ninety cents, dat'll do for a Christmus gift agin, an' seems lak I ain't got my dishes wiped from one Thanksgivin' dinner till I got to start in an' cook anodder."

"Well," 'spons Sis Malaria, "I reckon dat we ain't none of us gwine to be wore to a frazzle dis yeah cookin' our Thanksgivin' dinners, for wid de price of vittels a soarin' up lak one of dem dere airyplanes, de mos' dat we all will see of a tukkey, or chicken fixins, will be deir tail feathers as dey flies by on de wing to one of dem millionaires whut you reads 'bout in de papers."

"Hit's a lot easier to be thankful on a full stomach dan an empty one," 'spons I, "an' ef dere is any music sweeter dan any odder, hit is when a table groans under de good things to eat on hit, but I specs dis yeah our Thanks-

givin' is gwine to be sorter of a left-handed one, an' we's gwine to be grateful for de things we ain't got, an' dat we ain't no wuss off dan whut we is."

"Amen," says Sis Malaria, "an' hit suttenly is a gran' thing dat de President 'p'ints a day for us to return thanks for our blessings, for ef he didn't dere's a lot of us dat wouldn't think dat we needed to take a whole day off to do hit in. We'd think dat we could polish off de job befo' breakfast, an' not have to rush none, neither."

"Wellum," I 'spons, "I believes in celebratin' Thanksgivin' day, an' givin' thanks to Gord for all His mercy, but de Lawd is a long ways off, an' lakly He ain't bodderin' His head much 'bout whut we po' worms of de dust do an' say. But de folks dat is close to us, dey's different. We makes deir happiness or deir misery, an' so I'd like to see Thanksgivin' brought down from Heaven to earth, an' made mo' pussonal, so to speak.

"On Christmas day we all goes 'bout wid a glad, sweet smile wishin' each odder a Merry Christmas. An' on New Year's day we tells even our enemies dat we hopes dey'll have a

Happy an' a Prosperous Yeah befo' 'em. Why shouldn't we celebrate Thanksgivin' day by goin' to ev'ybody dat's done us a good turn, or has made us happy, an' speak right out to dere faces an' tell 'em how grateful we is to 'em for deir goodness to us instid of keepin' our 'pinions bottled up in us lak we was clams, an' a-waitin' to cyarve 'em on deir tombstones?

"Wouldn't hit des make de worl' sing for joy, an' Thanksgivin' de grandest day of de whole yeah, for I specs most folks is lak I is —dey ain't got much interest in whut folks say 'bout 'em at deir funerals, but dey suttenly would relish a few compliments while dey is still alive. Yassum, maybe a ghost does find some pleasure in roostin' on hits nice monument, an' readin' de kind words hits fambly done put on de stone 'bout hit, but as for me, give me my appreciation whilst I got some flesh an' blood to feel warm an' good wid.

"Now dere's Sis Luellen whut has to have gathers put in de back of her waistes to make room for her angel wings, dey done sprouted so. Sis Luellen suttenly is de pack hoss for de whole chu'ch. Ef a woman wants to go to

a marked-down bargain fight, or to de movies she goes an' dumps her chillun down on Sis Luellen. Ef anybody wants to borry anythin' dat dey don't never expect to pay back, dey borrys hit offen Sis Luellen. Ef anybody's taken sick dey runs for Sis Luellen. Hit's in Sis Luellen's arms dat de new-born baby is fust laid, an' hit's Sis Luellen's hand dat closes de eyes of de daid.

"Don't you reckon dat Sis Luellen would feel mighty lak she was paid, ef, on Thanksgivin' day, ev'y man, woman, an' chile dat she's done done somethin' for endurin' de yeah would come to her an' tell her how dey thanked her for hit, an' how she done help 'em over some hard place in life?

"An' dere's Sis Martha. You remember when Sis Martha's husban' died leavin' her wid six small chillun an' twinses, an' how ev'ybody say dat she'd better send 'em to de orphan asylum becaze she'd never in de worl' be able to feed all of dem hungry little mouths, an' keep clothes on dem rip-tearin' little bodies?

"Sis Martha didn't do hit. She kept her chillun wid her, an' she wuked lak no slave

ever toiled, an' somehow she raised dem chilluns, an' eddicated 'em, an' dey's all turned out to be fine men an' women whut's respectable, an' prosperous, an' got money in de bank.

"I des wonder how Sis Marthy would feel on Thanksgivin' day ef dem chillun of hers would come to her an' take her wuk-knotted ole hands in deirs, an' tell her how grateful dey is to her for all she done done for 'em, an' how dey appreciates all de sacerfices she done made for 'em, an' how dey thinks dat when dey hands out crosses for real heroes an' dem whut has stood up an' fought de good fight, dat she ought to git a row of badges dat'll kiver her from head to foot; for hit takes mo' courage to stand for fifteen yeahs over a washtub dan hit does to stand for five minutes befo' a gun.

"An' dere's Sis Hannah Jane whut married Br'er Ben, whut ain't got no mo' backbone of his own dan a fishin' worm, but Sis Hannah Jane done spliced her spinal column on to him ontel she done made a man out of him. When Sis Hannah Jane done married Br'er Ben he was a drunkard, an' a loafer an' didn't have a second shirt to his back, an' ef he'd been left

to hisself he'd still be settin' in de gutter instid of roostin' on de highest rung in de ladder in de lodge, an' rattlin' when he walks wid de money in his pockets.

"But Sis Hannah Jane she drag him home from de saloon at night, an' cook him up good hot things to eat, an' git him jobs, an' hold him to 'em, an' she inched, an' pinched, an' scrinched ontel she save up de money, penny by penny, for him to git a start, an' she's always done nine-tenths of de wuk an' give Br'er Ben all of de credit for hit.

"Maybe you can't make up to a woman for all she goes through wid dat kind of a husban', but I bet she'd wipe off de slate an' call hit even ef Br'er Ben would up an' promulgate to her on Thanksgivin' day dat he owes ev'ything dat he is, an' has, to her, an' dat when he thinks of all de love, an' de patience, an' de forgiveness dat she done showed him, dat he feels lak gittin' down in de dust an' kissin' de tracks of her big, flat, ole foot.

"Yassum, Sis Malaria," I goes on, "dat's de way dat I thinks dat we ought to celebrate Thanksgivin' day instid of stuffin' ourselves on tukkey an' cranberries, an' pies, an' things, so

dat we is too full for utterance. An' furdermo' I's gwine to take my own medicine, an' when Thanksgivin' day rolls aroun' I is gwine to my ole man Ike an' say to him:

"'Maybe you thinks dat I's as blind as a bat, an' as selfish as a cat, an' dat I don't see dat you's been toilin' an' moilin' all dese yeahs to keep me soft an' comfortable, an' dat I don't notice dat when you comes home of a Saturday night you turns over yo' wage to me, an' dat all you gits out of yo' hard wuk is des yo' board an' clothes—an' dem de wust in de fambly.

"'An' maybe you thinks dat I thinks all of dis is des my due an' whut's comin' to me, an' I don't appreciate de sacerfices you makes for me, nor remember de times when you is called my temper nerves, an' ain't handed me no back talk when I done blew in de rent money on a new blue sergin' dress wid almos' hand embroidery on hit. But I is took notice dat you is de grandest man an' de best husban' dat any wife was ever lucky enough to draw in de matermonial lottery, an' I des wants to thank you for makin' me a proud an' happy woman, an' to tell you dat I loves you 'bout a million

times mo' dan I did when I snatched you away from dat triflin' Sally Sue Smithkins dat you wouldn't have had no mo' sense dan to have married if I hadn't saved you.' Dat's whut I'm gwine to say to Ike on Thanksgivin' day."

"I wonder," says Sis Malaria, sorter thoughtful lak, "ef Br'er Ike carries a pretty good insurance, becaze I lay he will drop dead wid surprise ef you does tell him dat you's grateful an' appreciates all he does for you. Husbands ain't used to hit."

WOMEN

"SIS MIRANDY, ma'am," says Br'er Eben to me de odder day, "I reckon dat women is de most undiskivered nation of people whut dere is, an' de one of whose habits an' customs dat mankind knows de littlest.

"Men, now, dey is knowledgeous. Men is all cut off de same bolt, an' you can prognosticate whut a man is gwine to do, an' say, an' think befo' he does hit, but who can guess a woman?

"Whut makes me say dis is my ole woman, Mandy, whut I is been united to in de holy bonds for thuty yeahs, an' yit I ain't no mo' acquainted wid dat woman dan ef I ain't never set my eyeballs on her. Nuther can I cogitate

which way de cat is gwine to jump wid her, or whedder she'll hand me a kiss or lam me for whut I does.

"Now you take dis heah thing of birthdays, which, believe me, Sis Mirandy, is whut wrecks mo' matermonial happiness dan de Demon Rum, an' is whut turns husban's gray-haided an' stoop-shouldered befo' deir time, becaze whilst a wife will forgive her husban' for segasuatin' off of de straight an' narrow path now an' den, an' for makin' her take in washin' to suppo't him, de one thing dat no woman won't never forgive her husban' for is forgittin' her birthday. Hit's tryin' to remember deir wives' birthdays, an' not gittin' de date mixed up wid Labor Day, nor Good Friday, nor any of de days of fastin', an' prayer, an' repentance, dat wears men to skin an' bone.

"Goodness knows, long as women spends so much time an' work tryin' to keep young, you would think dey couldn't be hired to monkey none wid birthdays, an' dat after a woman done passed thuty dat she'd lose de count an' hope odder folks would, an' dat she would consider dat for nobody to mention her birth-

day to her was equal to handin' her out a handsome present. But dey don't, an' dat's whar one of de curis peculiarities of women come in.

"Well, my wife, she's des lak de balance of 'em, an' for 'bout three months she's been remindin' me dat her birthday was gwine to roll aroun', lak hit's got de habit of doin' dis time of yeah, an' she draps a few hints dat ef so be dat I was a thinkin' 'bout makin' her a birthday present, dough she misdoubts I'll forgit hit, dat one of dese heah new-fangled bead bags would des 'bout fill de bill an' make her glad dat she was bawn.

"Wellum, I tied a couple of knots in my handkerchief so I'd remember, but when I went to de sto' to buy hit, dey axed me twenty-five bucks for one of dem dinky little things dat warn't big enough to put mo' dan a little chicken-feed in—not dat dat makes no difference, becaze after a woman has done bought her pocketbook, hit done cost so much she ain't never got no money to put in hit, nohow.

"Wellum, I sho was flabbergasted, lak I tells you, at de price of dat bead bag, but I knows Mandy is done set her heart on hit, an'

I gits to thinkin' 'bout whut a good wife she's done been to me all dese long yeahs, an' how hard she's wuked, an' how she's scrimped an' saved, an' how she's been des as faithful to me as a yaller dog under a wagon, an' so I says to myself dat ef she wants dat bead bag, she's gwine to have hit, even ef I busses my gallusses to git hit for her.

"So I buys de bag an' persents hit to her on her birthday, an' she's tickled most to death wid hit, an' shows hit to all her friends, an' dey makes a great miration over hit, an' tells her whut a lucky woman she is to have a husban' whut always remembers her birthday, dough Gord knows I ain't got no chanst to forgit hit onless I was took stone deaf.

"Anyways, de bead bag makes a hit, an' I settles back to live in comfort ontel de next birthday rolls aroun', an' all would 'a' been well, 'ceptin' Mandy begins to wonder how much dat bead bag cost.

"When she worms hit out of me dat hit cost twenty-five plunks, she throws a fit an' wants to know whut de fool-killer was doin' when I was a-blowin' in dat much money on bead bags wid de rent comin' due, an' de chil-

lun needin' shoes, an' po'k chops a-soarin' to de sky in price. Den she turns on de water-wuks, an' for three days ev'y time she looks at me she busses into tears.

"I sho was one sore man to think I done waste my money in tryin' to please my wife, when all dat I done was to convince her I didn't have no sense, an' make her cry, an' I was a-thinkin' of cheerin' myself up by goin' out to de lodge, when she flung her arms aroun' my neck an' splained to me dat whut she was sheddin' all dem barrels of tears over was becaze she was so happy becaze I loved her enough to act lak a fool over her.

"Now can you beat dat? A woman cries when she's glad an' laughs when she's sad, an' she admires you when you is Mister Solomon, but she loves you most when you acts lak a plumb idjit, an' she walks all over you ef you makes a door-mat of yo'self tryin' to make life easy for her, an' she kisses yo' feet ef you tromples all over her wid spikes in yo' shoes. An' de trouble is dat you never can tell when she's gwine to do which.

"Dat's de reason dere ain't mo' good husban's. A man never knows when he's bein'

one, an' when he's givin' saterfaction, or gittin' on his wife's nerves, an' breakin' her heart.

"I done took notice dat dese heah husban's whut acts meek an' humble aroun' home, an' dat always turns in deir pay envelope widout openin' hit, an' dat walks de baby wid de colic, an' dat says 'our pants,' don't never seem very popular wid deir wives.

"Furdermo' I done seed women stick to husbands dat beat 'em, an' starved 'em, an' dat dragged 'em down to de gutter, an' so when you sees dat a woman seems to lak a bad husban' better dan she does a good one, hit keeps a man prognosticatin' whedder de best way to preserve his wife's affection is to hand her a sweet kiss or a black eye.

"Maybe de reason of hit is becaze a woman ain't never so happy as when she is puffectly miserable, an' she ain't never havin' such a good time as she is when she's sobbin' on de shoulder of some odder woman. Dat's why, when a woman goes to a show, she picks out one of dese heah three-handkerchief plays. An' hit's why she enjoys a mean husban' dat gives her somethin' to cry 'bout an' complain

'bout, whilst a good husban' don't furnish no subject for entertainin' conversation.

"Yassum, women suttenly is de curiousest animals dere is, an' dey's one dat no man knows de whyness an' de wharforeness of. Dat's why we's always a-chasin' 'em, an' ketchin' 'em, an' takin' 'em home wid us, an' tryin' to guess whut dey is gwine to do next.

"An' we always guesses wrong."

ROMANCE

LAS' night my daughter, Ma'y Jane, was readin' me an' her pa a piece in de paper dat tole 'bout dat man whut's been a prognosticatin' into de reason dat matermony is mo' of a scrappin'-match dan hit is a gran' sweet song, an' de man says dat people bein' so chuck-full of romantical idees is de main cause of divorsch, an' dat romance bustes up mo' homes dan drink or bad cookin' does.

"Bless de Lawd for de true words," says my ole man Ike when he hears dat, "dat's so, for ef hit warn't for dat chills an' fever ailment, dat dey calls romance, dat we breaks out wid when we is young, an' dat is mo' catchin' dan de measles, dere wouldn't be no

mo' divorsch becaze dere wouldn't be no mo' weddings. Yassum, hit's a cinch dat ef dey could vaccinate you against romance when you is a baby, you wouldn't have no 'casion to call in de lawyer to cure yo' matermonial afflictions when you was grown."

"Huh," I sclaims, "dere ain't nothin' de matter wid romance 'ceptin' folkses tries to make a whole meal on hit instid of nibblin' a mouthful or two of hit for dessert. Dat's de reason dey finds hit a kinder light diet dat makes 'em feel sorter weak, an' peevish, an' wid a kinder gone feelin' at de pit of deir stomachs, an' wid odder symptoms of starvation a segasuatin' aroun' deir systems dat makes 'em s'picion dat dey needs some odder lady, or genman beside de one dey is married to, for a heart tonic to brace 'em up.

"Romance," I goes on, "is de meringue on de lemon pie of life. Hit looks mighty good, an' hit's mighty sweet an' tasty, but hit ain't got no subjanst to hit. Dere ain't nothin' in hit dat'll stand by you when you's got to roll up yo' sleeves an' go to wuk to head off de bill-collector.

"But all de same, all of us is got a sweet

tooth, an' we's just as much got to have a little pie as we's got to have po'k an' beans, an' de folks dat's got sense, mixes 'em. Dey don't gorge deirselves on eider one or de odder, an' dey gits along widout gittin' de dyspepsy or landin' in de divorsch co't."

"Oh," cried out Ma'y Jane, whut is one of dese heah palpitatin' young females dat's always a-yearnin' after de highfalutin' things instid of gittin' busy wid dem things whut is under her nose, "Oh, whut would life be widout romance!"

"Well," 'spons her pa, "ef you axes me, I think hit would be mighty comfortable, an' dat a lot of us would 'a' been saved from gittin' ourselves into trouble, an' we'd be spendin' our money on ourselves in congenial company at de reg'lar meetin' of de Sons of Joy instid of havin' our good money go for sportin' skirts an' flower bonnets, an' havin' to stay at home an' listen to a passel of women talk 'bout romance becaze we ain't got de price to do nothin' else."

"Ef you axes me whut life would be widout romance, daughter," I answers sarcastic, becaze I done been washin', an' cookin', an'

patchin', an' mendin' for Ike all dese thuty yeahs dat I's been married to him, an' hit sho does raise my dander for him to hammer de holy estate after de slave wife I's been to dat man, "ef you axes me whut life would be widout romance, I says dat hit would be jes' one divorsch after anodder, becaze dere ain't nothin' but a woman's talent for wrappin' a man up in a pink, hand-embroidered romance dat she done weave out of her own imagination, dat makes hit so dat she can stand matermony at all. Believe me, dat ef women didn't kiver up deir husbands in romance so dat dey couldn't see whut po' little mis'able human shrimps dey is, nary a woman would have de strength, nor de grace, to stay married at all."

"Maybe so," 'spons Ike, "but dere'd be a lot mo' happiness in de worl' ef dere was mo' truth, an' less romance, an' ef people knowed whut dey was gittin' when dey tied up wid life partners instid of buyin' a pig in a poke.

"My lan'—hit suttenly does give me cold feet when I see young idjits lak Ma'y Jane is heah, an' lak you an' me was, a-signin' up a life contract in a trade in which both parties

has tried to con de odder one, an' in which neider one has got de slightest idee of whut dey is gittin', nor whar dey is gwine to land.

"Now des take courtship, for instance. Does de man come out flat-footed, an' tell de gal de truth 'bout whut he is, an' whut he's got to offer her, an' den leave hit to her to take de bargain or leave hit as she sees fit? Does he say to her, 'Sally Ann, of course I's got two eyes in my haid, an' dere ain't nothin' de matter wid my vision, so I's puffectly aware dat you wouldn't even come in for honorable mention in a beauty show, but I done took notice dat you is strong an' healthy, so I figures hit out dat de man whut marries you won't have to spend his money a-payin' doctors' bills.

"'Furdermo', I done sample yo' fried chicken, an' I laks de way dat you sails into de pots an' de pans lak you ain't afraid of 'em. Besides you kinder hits my fancy, so I done pick you out for a wife, ef so be you will have me.

"'But I's givin' hit to you straight, dat you ain't gittin' no prize package when you mar-

ries me. I don't pull down but fifteen bones a week, an' so far as I can see I ain't never gwine to be none of dese heah Napoleons of finance; so ef you ties up wid me as long as you lives you will have to wuk an' wear cheap clothes, an' squeeze ev'y nickel to git six cents out of hit, an' use yo' feet for yo' ortymobile.

"'Neider is I pertendin' to be a saint. I bet dere'll be plenty of times when I'll be dat mean, an' grouchy, an' kantankerous dat you'll wish dat you had de nerve to put poison in my coffee, but I loves you, gal, an' ef you's bent on actin' lak a fool an' throwin' yo'self away on some onery he man, why you might des as well sacerfice yo'self to me as anybody else.'

"Now dat's whut I'd call a honest offer of marriage, an' de gal dat took hit, after she done looked over de goods an' seen dat dey was as specified, would lakly be happy ever after, becaze she'd know in advance whut she was gittin' an' dere wouldn't be no disappointments to sour her disposition when she found out after she got her bargain home dat hit warn't no mo' lak whut she thought she

was gittin' dan a ginger cake is lak a elephant.

"But dat ain't de romantical idee of courtship, an' no man would dast hand a gal a honest proposal of marriage. An' she wouldn't stand for hit ef he did. Nawm, whut he leads her to believe is dat he's as rich as Mr. Rockinfeller, an' dat he's got a reg'lar William J. Bryan God-bless-you disposition dat nothin' can't rile, an' dat all de wuk dat she'll have to do ef she marries him will be to meet him wid a glad sweet smile of a evenin', an' smooth de lines of care from his brow wid her gentle hand.

"An' de gal marries him on dat flatform, an' when she finds out dat he's got a temper lak a cross-cut saw, an' dat she has to take in washin' to pay de rent, hit ain't no wonder she sorter s'picions dat she got cheated at de altar.

"An' de gal ain't no mo' honest dan de man. You don't never heah of no gal invitin' her beau to call aroun' accidental lak 'bout eight o'clock in de mawnin' befo' she's had a chanst to git on her straight front, an' her hand-made complexion, an' her angel character.

Naw, sir, an' you don't heah of no gal drappin' a hint to her fiancie dat she's dat scared of wuk dat she des runs away from hit an' leaves her po' ole ma to do hit all, or dat de reason her pa is so hump-shouldered is dat he's most bent double tryin' to pay her bills, or dat she's got a red-haided temper, an' a tongue wid a perpetual motion attachment to hit.

"Nawm, a gal would rather die dan not be romantical, an' sweet, an' gentle lookin', an' a man marries her wid dat kind of a halo aroun' her, an' den when de halo busses an' he finds out dat she's lazy, an' triflin', an' high tempered, he wonders whut de fool-killer was doin' de day he was united in de holy bonds of matermony with a lifetime of trouble an' tribulation.

"An' dat's why I says dat man is right when he prognosticates dat dese romantical idees is at de bottom of de divorsch evil. Hit ain't dat men an' women is so bad, dat makes deir wives an' husbands so discontented wid 'em. Hit's de disappointment of deir not bein' whut de party of de odder part thought dey was gittin'. Po'k-chops is mighty good eatin'

if you done set yo' mouth to eat po'k-chops, but hit kinder takes yo' appetite for 'em ef you bites into something dat you thinks is chicken, an' hit ain't nothin' but a po'k-chop."

"I wonder whut folks would do ef dey was to do away wid romance, an' tell each odder de truth befo' marriage," I says.

"Dey'd stay single," 'spons Ike. "Dere's things dat you's got to put up in fancy packages to git anybody to take 'em, but," Ike goes on, a leanin' over an' pattin' my hand whilst I was a-patchin' his britches, "after de red paint wears off of de wagon, hit's des as good, an' strong, an' useful as hit ever was—an' you couldn't git along widout hit—an' dat's de way wid me an' you, ole lady. Maybe we wouldn't have gotten married 'ceptin' for romance, but after hit was done we ——"

"Romance never gits away from a woman," I says; "she's got a death grip on hit dat never onloosens ontel she's in her coffin. Why, Ike, you still look to me des lak one of dem heroes at de movies," I 'spons, an' at dat Ike he say, "Huh," but when he passed me, he drapped a five-dollar bill in my lap, an' dat's how come I

got dis heah gran' new hat wid a fedder in hit.

An' as Ma'y Jane says, "Whut would de worl' do widout romance?"

ADVICE TO BRIDEGROOMS

Did you ever notice dat when anybody has got any advice to promulgate dey hands hit out to women? Dey don't pass hit on to men.

An' when a preacher preaches one of dese heah soul-scarifyin' sermons, whut holds sinners by de slack of deir clothes over de pit, he always addresses his remarks to de sistern instid of de brethren, dough Gord knows dat de brethren needs hit de mos'.

An' de papers is full of heart-to-heart talks to wives 'bout how to keep young an' willowy, so as to retain deir husbands' affection, but dere ain't a word in 'em, from kiver to kiver, to men 'bout how to keep de hair on deir haids an' from gittin' to look lak beer kegs on skids in order to preserve deir wives' love.

An' when a gal is gwine to git married, her ma, an' her married sisters, an' her cousins, an' her aunts takes her off to one side an' des fills her up wid useful hints 'bout gittin' off on de right foot, an' strikin' her husban' for plenty of money befo' he gits well enough acquainted wid her to dast to refuse her, an' drawin' de line at mo' dan one evenin' out a week, an' de odder matters dat helps a woman be de boss in her house. But you never heah of a father, nor a brother, nor a friend whut's passed through de tribulations of matermony hangin' up any red lanterns as danger signals for any odder man dat's about to start on de matermonial 'scursion.

Nawm, ef a man ever finds out how to manage a wife, he keeps de snap to hisself an' leaves ev'y odder man to work out his own salvation de best he can, but when a woman diskivers how to henpeck her husban', she passes de tip aroun' to ev'y odder woman she meets up wid, which shows whut gran' hearts women is got, an' how dey is des sloshin' over wid sympathy.

Cou'se I knows dat advice is most ginerally lak dese heah styley-lookin', ready-made

frocks dat you sees in de sto' windows. Hit looks lak a puffect thirty-six dat was jes' made for you, but when you tries hit on, hit don't fit yo' case at all. Hit's too long in some places an' too sho't in odders, an' hit don't meet in de middle, an' you finds hit mighty hard to be grateful to de pusson whut persented hit to you, ef so be as you takes hit.

But outside of advice mos' ginerally not wukin' out right, hit's kind of comfortin' to feel lak somebody takes enough interest in you to want to give you a steer in de right direction, an' dat's why I don't see why hit is dat men don't git deir full share of hit, same as women does. Maybe hit's becaze men is so bigoty dat dey t'inks dey's got sense enough to run deir own business by deirselves, an' dat when hit comes to a little thing lak dealin' wid a wife an' a mother-in-law, dat dey can do dat wid deir left hand widout askin' no counsel of nobody.

Yassum, I's heard a lot of young men, whut never had mixed up none wid matermony, discoursin' befo' dey was married on how dey was gwine to be de haid of deir own house, an' whut dey was gwine to let deir wives do,

an' whut dey wasn't gwine to let deir wives do, but I disremembers dat I's ever heard any of dese men a tellin', after dey had been married two or three yeahs, how deir schemes for managin' a wife wuked out, which sorter led me to think dat maybe dere was a kinder hitch in de perceedin's.

Yassum, de secret of how to manage a wife is one of de things dat ev'y man thinks he knows, ontel he tries hit, which is Gord's mercy to us women, or else we'd all be ole maids, an' you don't never heah of no bridegroom comin' an' settin' at de feet of a 'sperienced woman lak I is, an' askin' her for a few p'ints 'bout how to do hit.

Dat's de reason dat last night, when Sim Johnsing, whut's 'bout to tie up wid Sis Ma'y Ellen's daughter, Vi'let, come over to my house to tell me whut a gran' an' noble critter she is, an' how he knowed dat dere never was gwine to be nothin' but love an' sunshine in deir home, dat I des felt called on to bestow on him free, gratis, for nothin', some of de advice he didn't have 'nough sense to ax for.

"Dat's all right, Sim," says I, "for you to think dat way 'bout Vi'let an' matermony. I's

proud to heah yo' sentiments, an' hit's de way ev'y young man should feel when he starts into de holy estate. Nuther is I disputin' dat Vi'let is a angel, but even angels' wings sometimes gits ruffled, an' hit's money in a man's pocket an' peace in his home for him to have a good, reliable recipe for de best way to smooth 'em down.

"Now, s'pose you finds out after you is married to Vi'let dat she's one of dese heah women whut's afflicted wid de bargain counter habit, an' dat all of yo' money goes for things dat she ain't got no use for, but dat she buys becaze dey's been marked down from $1.50 to $1.49.

"Don't waste yo' breath argifyin' wid her, becaze she won't listen to a word you says. Don't rile her by tellin' her dat things dat she don't need ain't cheap at no price an' dat she is a waster, becaze ev'y woman believes dat she knows mo' 'bout handlin' money dan Mr. Rockinfeller, an' she wonders how hit was dat her husband ever kept out of de po'house befo' she took charge of his pocketbook.

"Naw, sir, dere's des one way to break a woman of de bargain habit, an' dat is to tell

her dat de things dat she buys looks lak bargains. Dat'll stop her, becaze de wharfore-ness of de whyness of a bargain is dat a woman thinks dat she's foolin' her best friends.

"Or suppose, after you gits married to Vi'-let, dat you finds out dat de mouth dat butter wouldn't melt in now is got a tongue in hit dat's hung in de middle an' dat wuks at both ends, 'specially when you's drapped by de crap game on yo' way from wuk or is a little late in punchin' de time-clock at home. Don't try to talk her down, becaze when hit comes to talkin', no man ain't a match for a woman. He lacks swiftness an' stayin' powers.

"Des you wait ontel she sorter runs down, an' den you tell her dat you grieves to see her git mad lak dat, becaze hit sorter breaks up dat sweet, gentle look an' dat pleasant smile which suttenly does make her look lak a angel. She'll simmer down jes' lak a pot you takes off of de fire when you says dat to her, an' she'll be 'fraid to do mo' dan say prunes an' prisms for fear of disturbin' de look on her face. Yassum, I seed a woman go roun' for thuty yeahs wid a set smile on her face becaze

somebody tole her dat she looked lak dat Mooney Liza picture dat you's got in yo' parlor.

"An' never make de mistake, lak lots of husbands does, of kickin' at yo' wife's cookin' an' tellin' 'bout de pie dat yo' ma used to make. Maybe Vi'let's bread will be fust aid to suicide, an' her po'k-chops taste lak murder an' sudden death, but instid of tellin' her how bad dey is, des smile sadly an' say dat she has done sp'iled you wid good cookin' ontel you ain't got no appetite for things dat ain't des right.

"Dat'll make her think dat she's got de reputation of bein' a boss cook, an' she'll break her neck to live up to hit, an' de fust news you knows, you'll be livin' on de fat of de lan'.

"Hit's a funny thing to me dat men ain't found out befo' dis dat ev'y woman treats her husban' lak she thinks he expects her to treat him, an' all dat a man is got to do is to hold up befo' his wife's eyes de picture of de kind of a wife he wants, an' she'll copy hit.

"But de main thing in managin' a wife is des not to be sparin' in de use of soft soap. Apply hit wid a liberal hand. Tell yo' wife

dat she's de prettiest thing in de world, an' de greatest manager, an' dat she's got de sweetest temper, an' she'll wuk her fingers to de bone for you an' pinch ev'y nickel till de buffalo squeals wid pain, an' she'll think ev'ything dat you do is done by ole man Solomon hisself.

"Try dese few rules, son," says I, "an' matermony will be a gran', sweet song. Hit ain't no trouble to wuk a woman—ef you knows how."

TELLING YOUR TROUBLES

AIN'T hit funny dat when women wants to have a real, sho' enuf good time dey des sets down an' norrates 'bout deir troubles? You'd think dat when anything happened to anybody dat was bad enuf for 'em to cry 'bout dat dey'd sorter draw de veil of silence over hit, but dat ain't de way dat de female intellek wuks.

Hit laks to perrade hits griefs in public, an' dere ain't nothin' dat a woman really enjoys lak havin' a secret sorrow dat she can tell to anybody dat'll listen. An' when she gits good an' started on tellin' her troubles, she des throws de throttle wide open an' lets her tongue go, no matter ef she is blastin' de characters of her own flesh an' blood.

Now dere's Sis Sally Sue, who 'bout once in so often comes over an' spends de day wid me, an' she des has a reg'lar party complainin' 'bout her chillun, an' how ondutiful dey is to her, an' how dey don't appreciate nothin' dat she does for 'em, an' how dey won't listen to her when she p'ints out to 'em dat dey's des rackin' along de road to ruin.

"Yassum, Sis Mirandy," says Sis Sally Sue in a mournful tone, "de hand of de Lawd is suttenly laid heavy on me. Yassum, Sis Mirandy, yo' chillun steps on yo' feet when dey is little, but dey tromples all over yo' heart when dey is growed up."

"Speak for yo'self, Sis Sally Sue," 'spons I, "for so fur as my chillun is concerned dey is done me proud, 'count of my bringin' 'em up in de fear of de Lawd an' de bed-slat, which suttenly does have a elevatin' influence on de young."

"I sho does envy you, Sis Mirandy, for you is one lucky woman to have a daughter lak Ma'y Jane," says Sis Sally Sue, fetchin' a groan. "Now dere's my Maude Geraldine whut I sent off to de Female Cemetery to school an' give all de disadvantages of eddi-

cation to. Yassum, I reckon I put de washin' of a thousand shu't-waists into dat gal's haid, an' whut is de reward dat I gits for my trouble? She goes a-galavantin' roun' wid dat Si Perkins, an' she stays out till twelve o'clock at night, an' she won't tell me whar she's been. I reckon ef all de tears I done shed over dat gal was put in a jug dere would be salt enough in hit to run a fambly for a yeah."

"Huh," says I, sorter clickin' my tongue against de roof of my mouth to make a noise lak sympathy, for hit's a jubous thing to agree wid anybody when dey's abusin' deir chillun.

"An' dere's my daughter Ca'line," goes on Sis Sally Sue, a-moanin' lak she was tooken wid a sudden misery. "She's dat lazy an' triflin' an' no-account dat she lays on her back an' reads novels whilst her po' ma wrastles wid de pots an' pans. An' she's dat selfish an' greedy dat she grabs de breast of de chicken an' de heart of de po'k chops by de time you sets 'em on de table. An' she's dat high-tempered dat I don't dast rile her, for she sho am a terror when she gits her dander up."

"You po' thing," says I, an' when you says

dat to a woman whut's tellin' her troubles, hit jes' sicks her on lak de smell of blood does a bloodhound.

"An' I ain't had no better luck in my son Tom dan I is in my gals," says Sis Sally Sue, a-wipin' her eyes, "for I misdoubts dat Tom was bawn too tired to wuk, an' dat he's got a hankerin' for hangin' roun' de pool parlor, an' instid of his suppo'tin' me, he lets his po' ole mammy wuk her fingers to de bone to feed him. Yassum, Sis Mirandy, bein' a mother sho am a hard job an' filled wid woe."

An' den Sis Sally Sue, whut's had a gran' time swiggin' tea an' tellin' me her troubles, goes on away to de next house an' prognosticates to de next woman all 'bout her sad tale, an' how mean her chillun treats her, an' how onery dey is.

'Bout three days after dat I run across Sally Sue agin, an' she sho' did have hay on her horns.

"Sis Mirandy," says she, "dis am a scandalous worl', an' full of snakes in de grass dat is tryin' to take away de good name of my precious chillun. Yassum, Sis Mirandy, de neighbors sho' must a been spyin' on Maude

Geraldine, for hit's done got out dat she's runnin' aroun' wid Si Perkins, an' de women is lookin' at her slantwise an' sayin' dat dey misdoubts dat she ain't no better dan she ought to be.

"An' furdermo', Sis Mirandy, I done heah dat some of dem young bucks say dat dey ain't got no notion of tyin' up wid a gal dat's lazy, an' triflin', an' greedy, an' high-tempered lak Ca'line, an' when I axed Br'er Eben, whut was lookin' for a steady, industrious young man, to give de job to my boy Tom, he say dat he done heah tell dat de only wuk dat Tom was good at was holdin' down a cheer, an' dat he ain't honin' to have dat kind of a loafer aroun' his place.

"My goodness, Sis Mirandy, ain't hit awful de way folks gossips, an' how in de worl' do you reckon dey ever promulgates all dem lies 'bout my angel chillun?"

"You tole 'em yo'self, Sis Sally Sue," 'spons I. "Ef you hadn't gone roun' tellin' yo' troubles an' noratin' 'bout Maude Geraldine bein' flighty, an' Ca'line bein' lazy an' shiftless, an' Tom no-account, dere ain't a one of us dat ever would have s'picioned hit.

"Yassum, Sis Sally Sue, dat's de way dat most all of de scandals git out. Folks tell on deirselves. Ef you'd trace any scandal right straight back home to hits ma, you'd find out dat somebody started de story dat brung shame an' disgrace on 'em, by tellin' deir troubles to somebody.

"Folks might have guessed something was wrong, an' dey might have s'picioned something, but dey never could have knowed for sho' or got de particlers, ef some woman whut couldn't keep her tongue behind her teeth hadn't gone aroun' tellin' jes' how her heart was broke, an' sheddin' a few barrels of tears all over de place.

"An' de po' goose, whut done squawked out de things dat she had ought to be killed for tellin', is des lak you. She wonders how dey got out, an' says dis sho' is a evil worl', whar you can't keep nothin' hid, but I's tellin' you dat we starts all of de reports on ourselves an' our famblies, an' dere's mighty little dat anybody finds out 'bout us an' our affairs dat we ain't tole 'em wid our own mouths.

"Co'se, Sis Sally Sue, I ain't a-'sputin' dat hit's a pleasure to tell yo' troubles, nuther is I

argifyin' dat hit's interestin' listenin' to odder folkses sorrows, but I reckons dat 'bout de most dangerous pastime dat a woman ever indulges in is when she onlocks de closet door, drags out de fambly skeleton, an' pulls de string, an' makes hit dance for her own pleasure—an' yours.

"Yassum, ef I was one of dese heah reformers—which please Gord I ain't, for I's got all I can do to keep ole Mirandy from segasuatin' off of de straight an' narrow path! —but, anyway, ef I was one of dem pussons whut is got a call to elevate de female sect, you know whut I'd do to raise 'em up to de higher life dat dey's always prognosticatin' 'bout livin'?

"I'd pervide 'em wid a lot of gags an' instruct 'em to put 'em on whenever dey felt de temptation comin' on 'em to tell deir troubles. An' most specially I'd teach 'em to haul out de reliable old bit an' clamp hit on tight an' fast in dem hours when women takes off deir corsets, an' lets down deir back hair togedder, an' goes on a tear jag, an' de onliest thing dey don't tell each odder is dem things which dey is done forgot.

"Ef you could stop women from talkin' 'bout deir troubles, you'd stop most of de trouble in de worl'. Dere ain't no odder such a healin' poultice as silence is, nohow."

THE MONOTONY OF DOMESTICITY

"I's been hearin' folks talk a lot of foolishness lately 'bout married life bein' dull, but, my lan', dem whut prognosticates dat way sholy must be dem whut ain't never tried hit, or else dey must be fighters from Fight Town, an' honin' to whip deir weight in wild cats.

"I don't know how dey figures hit out dat married life is dull. Me, I's been married to Ike nigh on to thuty yeahs, an' in all dat time I ain't found no place whar I struck de level ground, an' could set down ca'm an' peaceable, an' take my eye off of Ike.

"Nawm, I ain't never had no occasion to complain 'bout married life bein' dull. Ef dere was any more excitement in hit dan dere

is I'd have been a laid out long ago wid dis heah nervous prosperity dat de rich folks have.

"In de fust place, a man is a riddle no wife ever guesses. You kin be married to one for a million yeahs, an' think dat you knows de ins an' de outs of his temper, an' his appetite, an' his cussedness lak you does yo' own pocket, an' den, lo an' behol', de fust news you know, he ups an' does somethin' dat you ain't never suspected he had concealed in his system.

"Yassum, a husban' suttenly does keep you guessin', for you never kin tell when he's gwine to break out in a new place. Nawm, dere ain't nothin' dull in bein' married, an' dere ain't no sameness 'bout havin' a husban', which, I reckon, is de main reason dat most of us women wants one.

"Hit's de ole maids an' de ole bachelors whut ain't got nobody to sass 'em, an' dispute 'em, an' rile 'em, an' fight wid 'em dat gits dull an' lonesome lak. Not married folks. Life in one of dese heah ole bachelor clubs or spinsters' retreats makes me think of one of my batter-puddin's. Hit sets well on a weak stomach, but hit ain't got no flavor to hit.

"But matermony, hit's lak one of de fruit cakes whut I bakes at Christmas. Hit's full of ginger, an' spice, an' plums, an' raisins, an' hit's mighty apt to give dem a nightmare whut partakes of hit, but hit sho' has got taste to hit. An' dere's a lot of excitement in des tryin' to figger out de problem of whut made you marry de one dat you did, an' whedder you's glad or sorry, for you don't never guess de riddle.

"Yassum, I done been up ag'inst matermony for thuty yeahs, lak I said, an' I done found a plenty of things in hit dat sholy was a surprise to me, but I ain't never found no dullness. Leastwise I ain't wid Ike.

"Now I ain't a-sayin' nothin' ag'inst Ike. Ike, he's a good man, an' a fust-class bricklayer, an' a fair to middlin' husban', but he's one of de kind of men dat comes by de bolt. He's jest lak de general ruck an' run of 'em.

"He believed—leastways he did when we was married, for I's sort of shook his faith in dat doctrine—dat after a man an' woman was married, an' got settled down to housekeepin', an' de man got tired of holdin' her hand, an' tellin' her dat she was de Lily of de Valley,

an' de Rose of Sharon, dat de man ought to amuse hisself by galavantin' 'roun' at nights, whilst de woman couldn't want no mo' fun dan des waitin' up for him wid a sweet, patient smile, an' openin' de do' for him.

"Maybe married life would have been dull for me ef I'd a fell in wid dem views. I reckon hit am sort of wearin' an' monotonous settin' up by yo'self prognosticatin' whar yo' husban' is, an' whut he's a-doin'. Yassum, I specs dat is a sorter slow way to pass a evenin'. But dere didn't git to be no sameness in hit for me. 'Bout de second time Ike segasuated off by hisself, when he got home he found me waitin' up for him wid a big piece o' kindlin' in one han', an' de stove-lifter in de odder, an' you better believe dat dere warn't nothin' dull in married life for de next few minutes for me. Nor for Ike nuther.

"Furdermo' whut happened in dat little mix-up seemed to kinder interest Ike in home life, too. Leastways after he got out of de horspital he never went out no mo' huntin' excitement of an evenin'.

"Yassum, dere's plenty of ways of livenin' up married life—ef you's got de spunk.

"As for me, I's always kept things goin', an' Ike an' me ain't found no sameness, an' when things git sort of so-so, an' we can't dispute 'bout nothin' else, we can always fall back on de chu'ch.

"I don't know whut dem famblies do whut ain't got no religion in 'em. Now, I's a deep-water Baptist, an' Ike, he's a predestination foreordained Presbyterian sprinkler. I's done lost a tooth, an' Ike's got a bald spot tryin' to settle de question of infant baptism, dat we started to argyfy over befo' we was married, an' dat we ain't settled yit, an' to dis day hit's just as good for a shindy as a nickel is for a ginger cake.

"I hear some married women complainin' dat married life am dull becaze dey's always a-cookin', an' a-sweepin', an' a-scrubbin', an' a-patchin' for husbands dat don't never notice whut dey has done, an' whut gits de lockjaw when things go right, but dat kin hand out lambastin' lak a talkin' machine when de bread gits burnt, an' de meat am tough. I don't blame 'em. Hit sholy does git on yo' nerves to wuk yo' fingers to de bone for a man whut growls lak a dog over his vittels.

"But I done settled dat long ago. Cou'se no woman specs much manners from her husban', an' I warn't a-lookin' for Ike to stand aroun' an' hand me out bouquets. But hit didn't take but one stick of stove-wood to teach him dat I could make better cake dan his mother ever dared to, an' dat ef he ever throwed up her biscuit to me, dere would be one nigger dat would have to take his clothes an' go an' hunt for anodder boa'din' place.

"Den Ike, he's mighty given to makin' sheep's eyes at ev'y pretty gal he runs across, but, my Lawd, you orter see de excitement dat I put in things when I caught him hangin' over de gate a confabulatin' wid dat Ma'y Jane Jones, whut ain't no better dan she ought to be. I fairly made de fur fly, an' de way things hummed aroun' our house was a caution.

"Nawm, I don't know whut dey means when dey talks 'bout married life bein' dull—specially for a woman. Fust dere's de sport of catchin' a man, an' den dere's de excitement of holdin' on to him after you gits him, an' ef dat don't keep a woman up an' doin', an' interested, I don't know whar she'll find

"COU'SE NO WOMAN 'SPECTS MUCH MANNERS FROM HER HUSBAN'"

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a job wid enough thrills in hit to suit her taste.

"Dere ain't no sameness 'bout life when you's got a husban', 'caze a husban' is lak a flea. You never can put yo' finger on him, an' jes' 'bout de time dat you thinks dat you's got him, he ain't dar.

"Dere ain't no settlin' a man till he's settled in de grave. An' dat's de reason dat widders is de only women dat has got a ca'm an' peaceful look. Hit's de fust time deir minds have been at rest since dey got married.

"Nawm, I done found lots of things in married life dat I warn't lookin' for, but I ain't found hit dull. Appears to me dat matermony is mo' lak monkeyin' wid a buzz-saw dan anything else in dis world."

KISSING

"SIS MIRANDY," says Sis Hannah Jane, "is you done read in de paper 'bout dat man whut has done gone to de co't, an' axed de jedge, please, sir, to pertect him from his wife kissin' him to death?"

"De lan's sake!" sclaims I, "you don't say so! But dat man sholy must be lackin' in probusness ef he can't git away from his wife's kisses. I lay dat ef I was to set out to enjoy a kissin'-bee wid my ole man, Ike, dat I'd have to do hit on de run, an' hit's my opinion dat he would outsprint me."

"Dat's de true word," 'spons Sis Hannah Jane, "but dis heah man says as how his wife is of dat confectionery a disposition dat all de time dat she is at home she is a-hangin' 'round

his neck, an' a-kissin' him ontil he ain't got no appetite left for his vittels. So he done ax de jedge to put his wife under bonds to keep de peace, an' not to kiss him mo' dan three times a day—an' dem kisses is got to be short, quick ones, dat you gits soon over wid, lak you swallows a pill."

"Well, I ain't a-blamin' him," says I, "an' he ain't de fust man dat's got into trouble over havin' one of dese heah kissin'-bug wives. Dat's de way dat Br'er Eben los' de top of his ear. My gracious, ain't you never heard dat tale? Hit was lak dis:

"You know Br'er Eben is married to Sis Araminty, whut's one of dese heah clingin'-vine women, whut hangs 'roun' a man lak a wet dishrag roun' de clothes line; an' she suttenly was de boss kisser, whut could a-held de long-distance indurance record against all comers.

"When Br'er Eben come home tired of a night from his wuk he had to spend ten minutes kissin' her, when all he was a-thinkin' 'bout was his dinner, an' when he started off of a mawnin' in a hurry to his carpenter shop he had to stop an' kiss her ten minutes mo'.

Sometimes he'd git sort of desperate, an' think dat he'd make a sneak of hit an' cut out de kissin', but if he did Sis Araminty's three chins would all of 'em begin to trimble, an' she'd say in a voice lak a dyin' calf, 'Ain't you done forgot somethin', Eben?' and den Br'er Eben would have to come back an' kiss her whilst he was a-thinkin' all de cuss words in de dictionary.

"Well, dat's de way things goes along ontil one day Br'er Eben was on his way home, an' he stopped at de butcher shop an' bought a couple of pounds of liver, dat he lef', absent-minded lak, a-layin' on de butcher's block; an' jest as he retched de do' de butcher called him back, an' say, 'Ain't you forgot somethin', Eben?' des lak Sis Araminty always say when he skipped kissin' her.

"An' Br'er Eben, from de force of habit at hearin' dem words from Sis Araminty so often, retched across an' give de butcher a kiss right on de mouth, an' de butcher returned hit wid one swipe of de cleaver whut took off de top of Br'er Eben's ear, lak I tells you. Dey do say as how dere was a gran' fight in dat butcher shop befo' Br'er Eben got de butcher

pinned down on de flo' so dat he could 'splain matters to him, but Br'er Eben was dat riled dat when he went home he gives Sis Araminty a black eye, an' tole her dat from dat day on, dat ef she ever dast to say kiss to him he'd raise de roof off'n de house."

"Hit's a mighty funny thing to me," says Sis Hannah Jane, "how little interest a man takes a-kissin' his own wife. Befo' you is married to a man he is ready to risk his neck climbin' up fo' stories to yo' window to steal a kiss, but after you is married to him you has to bind, an' hobble him, an' hold him, befo' he lets you give him one."

"Dat's so," 'spons I, "an' I reckon dat 'bout de mos' insultin' thing on dis earth is one of dese heah hit-or-miss husband-kisses dat is as liable to land on de back of yo' haid, or de p'int of yo' jaw as on yo' mouth, an' dat is got des 'bout as much warmth an' flavor to hit as a cold griddle-cake. I tell you, Sis Hannah Jane, dat ef I warn't a long-sufferin', patient, Christian woman I'd fling de coffee-pot at my husband's haid ev'ytime he hands me out one of dem pecks on de cheek dat seems to say, 'Thank Gawd, I done my duty by my

wife, an' I've got hit over wid, an' I don't have to kiss her no mo' ontil to-morrow mawnin'!'"

"Yas, Lawd," says Sis Hannah Jane, "when Si was a-courtin' me his kisses sounded lak cold molasses runnin' out of de bung of de barrel, dey were dat long drawn out an' sweet, but now when he kisses me hit's lak one of dese heah movin'-picture shows. Now you see hit, an' now you don't."

"Well, Sis Hannah Jane," 'spons I, "hit's all in a lifetime! Kissin' is for de young. Hit don't belong to de day when we is got fat, an' eats onions, an' has store teeth; an' de woman whut is got gumption quits kissin' her husban' befo' he gits tired of kissin' her, an' hit leaves him a sort of wishin' dat she would, instid of bein' sorry dat he has to."

"Huh!" 'spons Sister Hannah Jane, "all I got to say is dat ef a wife kin beat her husban' to de p'int where he puts de kiss on de shelf she's got to be a sooner."

"As for me," says I, "I ain't got much faith in kissin' anyway. I's done took notice dat when a woman is gwine to stick a hatpin in me, an' say somethin' to me dat'll make me want to take a bed-slat to her, dat she always

begins to preamble by callin' me 'dearie,' an' givin' me a kiss. Yassum, Sis Hannah Jane, you keep yo' eye peeled for dem ladies whut is kissers, for dey is snakes in de grass, dat fust licks you all over, an' den swallows you.

"An furdermo', Sis Hannah Jane, hit's done been proned into me dat dese heah kissin' husbands will bear watchin', for hit ain't natcheral for a married man to be a-carryin' on dat way over his wife onless he's a-tryin' to distract her attention from somethin' he don't want her to find out. Yassum, Sis Hannah Jane, I's done learnt from 'sperience dat when Ike comes home of a evenin' an' puts his arm 'roun' me, an' gives me a smack on de mouth dat you kin hear 'roun' de block, dat I dest as well git up an' hunt up de money dat I done hid in de teapot to buy me a bead chain wid, for he's a-fixin' to borry hit. Or else he's been a-segasuatin' 'roun' wid dat hussy, Sally Sue Jones, an' he's afeared I'll hear of it, or he's a-plannin' to make a sneak for de lodge.

"For Ike, he's des lak de balance of de husbands; he done found out dat ef a man wants to shut a woman's eyes de easiest way is to

kiss 'em shut; an' dat ef you wants to close a woman's mouth de quickest way is to kiss hit close.

"An' de men ain't de only ones dat knows how to play de kissin' game. Whenever I see one of dese little sick-kitten women, whut's always hangin' 'roun' her husband's neck, an' has to foller him three blocks down the street of a mawnin' when he starts to wuk, befo' she kin make up her mind to part wid him for de day, I's willin' to bet dat he's got holes in his socks, an' dat he has to git up an' cook his own breakfast while she lays in de bed an' tells him how she loves him. Hit's funny, ain't hit, dat as long as married folks is doin' deir duty, an' ain't got deir eye on nobody else, dat dey don't feel no call to always be kissin' an' swearin' dat dey loves each odder. Dat's whut makes me suspicious of dese free-hand kissers.

"Nawm, I ain't got nothin' to say against kissin'; but a kiss ought to be lak de flavorin' in a cake. Hit ought to be used wid a sparin' han', an' have plenty of ginger in hit."

"I disremembers," goes on Sis Hannah Jane, a-gwine back in her mind to de story in

de paper, "of ever hearin' of any wife gwine to de co't an' axin' de jedge to make her husban' stop kissin' her."

"Dere ain't no woman dat needs to!" I 'spons.

DIVORCE

"SIS MIRANDY," says Sis Peruna to me de odder day, "how does you stand on dis heah divorsch question?"

"Well, Sis Peruna," I 'spons, "I don't stand on hit at all. I's a-settin' a straddle of de fence on de divorsch question, ready to jump accordin' to de way dat Ike treats me. When he comes home of a Saturday night an' fetches me his pay-envelope widout openin' hit, an' kisses me, an' tells me dat I's de yallow rose of Texas, an' dat all I's got to do to make a po'k-chop taste like fried angel is jest to pass my hand over de skillet, why, den I's agin divorsch, root an' branch, an' ready to hike out for South Ca'liny whar dey ties de knot in a hangman's knot dat you can't slip whilst dere's any breath left in yo' body.

"But when Ike comes home mean an'

grouchy, an' full of cussedness, an' when he kicks de cat an' slaps de baby an' grumbles over his dinner, why, den I begins to think kinder longingly of Reno, an' wonders whut's the price of a ticket to dat land of freedom whut is flowin' wid milk an' honey an' alimony.

"No, Sis Peruna," I goes on, "I ain't a-sayin' I's fur divorsch, an' I ain't a-sayin' I's agin hit, but I will say dat dere's times an' seasons, when de yoke of matermony gits to gallin' my neck, when I laks to sorter toy wid de thought dat I could slip hit ef so be hit got a little heavier.

"I ain't a-sayin' I's ever really wanted to jump over de bars, but hit jes' sorter rests my eyes to look over de fence at dat green pasture whar de divorschees is kicking up deir heels an' runnin' free widout no halter on 'em. Furdermo', Sis Peruna," says I, "I specs dat dere ain't no married pusson, male nor female, no matter how good a husban' or wife dey is got, dat wouldn't say 'amen' to dat sentiment ef dey tole de truth. For dere's occasions, Sis Peruna, when de partner of yo' bosom suttenly does git on yo' nerves, an' when you'd

rather have a real nice bindin' divorsch dan a diamond necklace."

"Sis Mirandy, you suttenly does scandalize me," exclaims Sis Peruna. "As for me, I's ag'inst divorsch, an' I believe dat when folks gits married, dey takes each odder for better or wusser, so long as life lasts."

"Well, I sholy does admire a sportin' spirit myself," 'spons I, "an' when I looks aroun' an' sees de folks dat ain't got nothin' but de wusser in deir marriages, an' yit who ain't welchin' on der bargains, hit looks lak to me dat dey ought not to be handin' out dem hero medals to de soldiers dat ain't done nothin' but fight in de trenches. Dey orter go to dem husbands an' wives whut's done stood stedfast to deir post in de holy estate. Yassum, dem martyrs whut's fried on de cook-stove deserves des as much credit as dem whut's burnt at de stake, an' dem men whut don't run away from a wife wid a rapid-fire tongue is des as brave as dem whut stands up in front of a machine-gun."

"Dem whut God hath joined, let no man put asunder," said Sis Peruna, a-rollin' up her eyes to de ceilin'.

"Don't you worry none 'bout dat," 'spons I, "dem whut Gawd hath joined, dere ain't no danger of nobody puttin' asunder. But whut 'bout dem whut de devil has jined togedder? Whut 'bout dem fools of boys dat thinks dat dey is filled wid undyin' love for women ole enough to be deir mothers when dey's only filled wid bootlegger whisky, an' marries 'em? Whut 'bout dem po' little idjits of girls dat picks out a husban' befo' dey's got sense an' jedgment enough to pick out a caliker frock by demselves? Whut 'bout dem weak little sisters whut deir mas marries off to ole men becaze de men has got money in de bank? I lay dat ef dem kind of matches is made in heaven, dat dem parties ain't got many friends dere."

"Why, Sis Mirandy, you ain't fur divorsch, is you?" axes Sis Peruna.

"Nawm," I 'spons, "I ain't a-rootin' for divorsch. Nuther is I teetotally aginst hit. As I said, I'm on de fence on dat question, ready to jump whichever way de cat goes. Cou'se divorsch is a mighty bad thing, but so is a scrappin' marriage. Hit's a evil day for a woman to forsake de man dat she has sworn

to love an' honor, but hit ain't no millennium for de woman whut's married to a brute dat comes home an' beats her, an' drags her down to de gutter.

"Hit's wrong for a man to leave de woman dat he has done promised to cherish an' protect, but hit's des as wrong for a woman to nag an' scold a man, an' lambast him wid one of dese heah red-headed tempers ontel he thinks dat he's done struck purgatory befo' his time. Hit sholy is hard on de po' little chillun dat has deir home broke up by divorsch, an' deir ma go one way, and deir pa go anodder, but whedder hit is better for a chile to be a half orphan in peace, dan to have both parents togedder fightin' an' flingin' things at each odder's haids, hit'll take a Philadelphy lawyer to settle. I don't know.

"But hit does look lak to me dat when a husban' an' wife gits to de pint whar dey brings out all de meanness in each odder lak a hot poultice brings out de measles, an' when dey hates each odder so dat dey's a-lookin' forward to each odder's death lak hit was a kinder fou'th of July dat would bust deir bonds an' set 'em free, why, in my opinion, a

divorsch decree is a lot more sacreder dan deir weddin'-certificate.

"But dere's one thing I does think, Sis Peruna, 'bout dis divorsch business, an' dat is dat we ought to have some kind of a settled fashion in divorsches dat dey ought to be a-wearin' from one end of de country to de odder, jes' lak dey does de same sorter white shoes, an' high-water skirts, an' college clothes. Deir ought not to be one way of gittin' ontied from yo' life partner dat's all de style out in Dakota, an' anodder way dat's de latest wrinkle in New York, whilst any mussy kind of a second-hand, made-over one is good enough for Chicago an' Kansas City.

"Hit sholy must be kind of a wear an' tear on yo' feelings to have yo' joggraphy an' yo' divorsch all mixed up, an' to be married to a man in one place an' drawin' alimony from him in anodder, an' not to dast take yo' latest legal husban' over de state-line for fear you'll be 'rested for bigamy. Nawm, I don't want none of dem pink tradin'-stamp divorsches dat ain't good anywhere but at de counter whar you got 'em. Ef ever I pays a lawyer to bust de holy bonds of matermony for me, I wants

'em smashed into smithereens, an' a divorsch dat will keep in any climate."

"Sis Mirandy," axes Sis Peruna, "do you think dey'll ever stop divorsch?"

"Sis Peruna," says I, "ef you'll take notice, you'll see dat nearly all of dem whut is strong for de suppression of de divorsch evil is either folks dat is too ole to take any pussonal interest in swappin' partners, or else dey is ole maids, an' ole bachelors whut ain't never tried matermony. So fur as I can see, de anti-divorsch sentiment is mighty lukewarm, an' dere ain't no popular clamor to strengthen up de laws on de subject, for most folks is either got a divorsch, or dey thinks dat dey might want to git one some day, an' dey don't want to shut de door of hope in deir faces.

"But whilst dey ain't never gwine to stop de divorsch evil, I could tell 'em how to squelch hit ef dey would ask my advice."

"How's dat?" says Sis Peruna.

"Well," says I, "in de fust place I'd make hit so hard to git married dat only dem dat could prove dat dey had lovely dispositions, an' dat dey didn't have de shoppin' habit, an' dat dey could suppo't a fambly, an' knew how

to cook, an' dat dey didn't have no in-laws to visit 'em, an' dat dey was so near-sighted dat dey couldn't see no odder man nor woman, 'ceptin' de one dat was right under deir noses, could git a license to tie up wid anodder pusson. An', believe me, dat knot would stay tied. De only way to make people quit gittin' divorsches is to make 'em quit wantin' 'em. Yassum, dat's de word wid de bark on hit.

"Den I'd cut out de alimony for de women, an' de second marriage for de men, an' dat would finish up de business. Ef a woman knowed dat she would have to go out an' earn her own board an' clothes as soon as she got her divorsch, she'd stand a lot of back talk from a man dat she won't put up wid now, becaze she figures out dat de law will make him suppo't her anyway.

"An' ef men knew dat dey would be cut off from marryin' when dey got a divorsch, dey would stay married, becaze hit's mighty seldom dat a man finds out dat he can't stand his ole wife ontel he gits his eye on a younger an' spryer gal dat's 'bout half as big aroun' as his wife is.

"Dat's whut's de matter wid divorsch.

Hit's got all de prize packages comin' wid hit, an' ef you take dem away, you's gwine to find a lot mo' people dat'll put up wid each odder's little aggrefrettinness, an' rub along wid mo' or less peace in de fambly circle. You des listen to me, for I's givin' you de true word."

MAKING THE BEST OF THINGS

HONEY, is you ever done had a whole barrel of apples at oncet an' de same time? If you is, don't you remember dat out of dat whole barrel you ain't never set yo' teeth in a fuss-class apple because you was always a-pickin' dem over an' eatin' de specked apples an' de apples what was gittin' a little soft an' startin' to rot?

All de time you was a-fixin' yo' mouth for a bait of good apples when you got de bad ones et up, but befo' you got to de good apples, dey was done spiled, too, an' so you never got done wadin' through de garbage to de feast.

An' dat's why dere's mo' good eatin' in a ten-cent bag of apples dat you sets down and makes de best of whilst dey's fresh, dan dere

is in forty dollars' worth of apples dat you's got on yo' mind dat you has got to take keer of, an' dassent enjoy.

Wellum, you know dat sometimes I gits to thinkin' dat life is des lak dat barrel of apples dat we don't never git no good out of becaze we ain't got enough sense to take de good things hit gives us while dey is still good. We puts off enjoyin' de things we might enjoy, ontel all de joy is done gone out of 'em.

What makes me say dis is dat I'se just been to Sis Susannah's, an' she was showin' me her fine new frock dat she des bought. It was suttenly a gran' dress, one of dem styley things dat dey calls in de sto' a confectionery, all made of dish heah Georgy Ann crêpe, wid beads on hit.

"My lan', Sis Susannah," says I, makin' a great 'miration over hit, "but you suttenly will be de proud woman when you walks down de aisle at chu'ch, nex' Sunday, an' has ev'y-body rubberin' at you! I bet dere won't be nary sister dere dat won't go home thinkin' dat de text of de sermon was, 'Where did she git hit? An' what did hit cost? An' go thou an' do lakwise.'"

"Goodness gracious, Sis Mirandy!" 'spons Sis Susannah, an' her voice fairly trimbled wid horror. "You don't think dat I'se gwine to be foolish enough to put on my bran'-new frock an' wear hit right out to meetin', does you? Why, I'se a-savin' dat frock for some gran' an' scrumptious occasion, when I calkilates to flaunt myself aroun' in hit an' take de shine off of ev'ybody else.

"No, Sis Mirandy," she goes on, "I ain't one of dem wasteful, flighty fliberty-jibberts, lak Sis Peruna, what's always got de ve'y best she is got on her back an' nothin' hangin' up in her closets. I always makes hit a rule, for I is a forehanded woman, Sis Mirandy, to wear out my ole clothes fust, an' I'se got frocks laid by dat I has had for fo' years, dat I ain't never had on my back."

"But why don't you git de good out of yo' fine clothes whilst dey's in de fashion, instid of waitin' to wear 'em when dey looks lak back numbers?" I axes her.

"Becase I is layin' up dat pleasure for de future," she says.

"Huh, to-morrow don't never come," 'spons I, "an' de fust news you knows, you is gwine

to die in yo' old clothes, an' Br'er Eben's second wife is gwine to be segasuatin' aroun' in yo' finery."

Co'se she didn't listen to me, because when hit comes to knowin' how to manage, ev'ry woman thinks dat she could give de Almighty pints 'bout how to run de worl' widout wastin' de glimmer of a single star. But when I looked at Sis Susannah, whut always 'pears lak she is jist done been fished out of de rag-bag, an' thought about all of her fine clothes dat she was waitin' to wear ontel dey was rag-baggy too, hit sorter set me to studyin' about how plumb foolish we is not to git de mos' out of things whilst we can.

An' hit was proned into me dat all dat any of us is got is jist to-day an' de things dat we is got in our hands, an' dat if we would make de mos' of dem, dat maybe we wouldn't have to go wanderin' aroun' seekin' for happiness an' never findin' hit. We would diskiver hit in our own homes. An' mo' 'specially we wouldn't put off bein' happy ontel we was ole. We'd be happy right now.

For who knows what's gwine to happen to us when we is ole? Maybe we'se gwine to be

lak Br'er Mose, who suttenly was a hearty man wid a corn-beef-an'-cabbage appetite when he was a young buck, an' one dat liked to shake a foot in de dance. Many is de time dat I'se seed de hongry tears stand in Br'er Mose's eyes when he looked at de fried fish in a eatin'-house window, but instid of goin' in an' blowin' hisself for a good feed, Br'er Mose would button up his pockets, an' stuff cotton in his years so he couldn't hear de fiddle scrapin' for de dance, an' go home an' cook hisself some of dat serious stuff dat's fillin' an' cheap, an' a insult to yo' stomach.

"Time enough for me to pomper myself wid fine vittles an' fun when I'se ole an' has laid by money in de bank," he would say. "Den I sholy is gwine to gorge myself on chicken fixin's, an' roast possum, an' punkin pie, an' sech lak dainties. An' I'se gwine to all de dances far an' near, wid so much spondulicks in my pocket dat I'll rattle lak you is shakin' de kitchen shelf, when I cuts de pigeon wing, an' all de gals will jest be honin' to dance wid me."

So Br'er Mose starve along an' starve along, an' he git rich an' ole lak he say, but now dat

de time done come dat he done set to be happy in, hit's too late for him to enjoy hit. De picnic scursion of life is done gone tootin' down de track an' passed him by. He got de money to buy all de good food he wants, but he ain't got no appetite to call for hit an' no teeth to eat hit wid, an' he's got de dispepsy in his stomach, an' de rheumatics in his knees, an' no gal to dance wid him.

Yassum, we is got to grab at de tail feathers of happiness as it flies by us, ef we ever ketches hit at all. We ain't never gwine to meet up wid hit an' find hit waitin' on de fence ready to come an' roost in our hand. I knows dat from 'sperience. I'se gittin' to be a ole woman, an' when I looks back, de things dat I weeps and mourns over ain't de pleasures I took, but dem dat I missed takin'.

Cou'se dere ain't nobody in dis world got all dey want, nuther is things des exactly lak dey wants dem, but ef you'll des mak' up yo' mind to lak de things dat you is got, you will always have what you laks.

An' dat's true about folks jes' as well as hit is about things. Dere ain't nobody dat comes up to all de specifications dat we lays down

for a perfect angel, but ef we would des turn our eyes on deir virtues an' be blind to deir faults, we'd git a lot mo' pleasure dan we does out of dem folks dat de good Lawd wisht on us, an' dat we wishes on ourselves in matermony.

Yassum, dat's de way hit looks to me. De real secret of happiness is gittin' de most fun out of people an' things whilst de gittin' is good, for I done noticed dat dem what is waitin' to enjoy deir good times in de future somehow don't never seem to make connection wid dem.

Dat's why I always picks out de best apple to eat fust. Dat way I'se always eatin' de best apple dere is. Maybe dat was de wisdom dat Eve found out when she bit into de Apple of Knowledge in de gyarden of Eden.

SILENCE

I CAN always tell when Sis Tempy, which is de wife of our preacher, Br'er Jinkins, is done been given Br'er Jinkins de rough side of her tongue, becaze on dem occasions when Br'er Jinkins gits up in de pulpit whar Sis Tempy dassen't answer him back, he preaches a sermon on de faults of women dat makes de back hair of all de sisterns in de congregation stand on end wid horror. Yassum, after one of dem discourses of Br'er Jinkins's 'bout whut po', miserable worms of de dust de female sect is, you goes home dat shamed of bein' a woman you ain't got de nerve to look yo'self in de face.

Yassum, I specs Br'er Jinkins an' Sis Tempy is had a awful row—lakly 'bout dat

long, stringy Gladys Sue Johnsing whut sings in de choir, an' whut Br'er Jinkins sorter casts sheep's eyes at, an' who Sis Tempy can't abide —she bein' short an' fat. Anyway, las' Sunday night he preached 'bout dat Tower of Babel in de Bible whar dey talked wid forty million tongues, an' he say dat he bet dat ev'y one of dem Babelers was a woman. An' den he went on to say dat most of de trouble in de worl' was made by talkin', an' dat mos' of de talkers was women, an' whut a grand, sweet, lovely, quiet, peaceful time we would have ef ev'ybody in hit would cultivate de virtue of silence. An' whilst he was a-promulgatin' dis doctrine, all de men set up wid deir eyes shut an' a sorter hallelulah look on deir faces, an' kept a-shoutin': "Bless Gord for de true word you has given us! Amen! De Lord send de day an' send hit quick!"

But de women set up dat quiet dat you could have heard a pin drap, ef so be any one had a-drapped hit.

Goin' on home, Br'er Jinkins, he walk along wid us, an' he say, "Well, Sis Mirandy, I trusts dat you found de sermon dat I was promulgatin' dis mornin' a edifyin' discourse."

"Well, Br'er Jinkins," 'spons I, "dem dat de cap fits, let 'em wear hit. As for me, I ain't a-disputin' de wisdom of de Lawd, an' when He give woman a tongue dat was hung in de middle an' dat wuked at both ends, I specs dat He knowed whut He was 'bout, an' dat He intended her to use hit. Dat I does. An' I ain't never let my talent rust in my mouth."

"Dere's many a man been drove away by his wife's talkin', Sis Mirandy," says Br'er Jinkins, wid a meanin' look.

"An' dere's many a wife been drove to throwin' things by her husband's silence," 'spons I. "As for me," I goes on, "I don't take no stock in dese heah mummy husbands dat comes home of a night an' sets up des as still an' quiet as a corpse, an' dat you can't git a word out of onless you draws hit out wid a corkscrew. Naw, sir, my idee of spendin' a nice, pleasant, happy evenin' at home ain't settin' up opposite a man dat ain't got no mo' conversation in him dan a stuffed bear, yet I knows forty women dat has to do dat, an' dat ef you'd put a pillow an' a pair of britches in deir husband's cheer in place of deir hus-

bands, dey never would find out no difference. One of 'em would be just as chatty an' just as pleasant to have aroun' de house as de odder.

"An' as for dem husbands whut pulls off one of dem silent grouches when anything goes wrong in de fambly, give me a man dat swears, an' cusses, an' breaks up de furniture when he gits mad! A wife can deal wid a man who spits hit all out, an' tells her whut she's done dat's riled him, an' she can fight back, or explain, an' de row is soon over an' dey kisses an' makes up. But she can't do nothin' wid a man dat des glooms aroun' de house, an' dat won't tell whut's de matter, or do nothin' but des freeze her to death wid one of dem silences dat says mo' hateful things dan dere's enough words in de dictionary to tell. Yas, sir, of all de mean husbands in de worl', de meanest is dem silent grouchers.

"Dis heah thing of silence is one of dem things dat sounds better dan dey wuks out, anyway," I goes on. "Who likes a silent pusson? I don't know nobody dat's a-pinin' for de s'ciety of one of dem individuals dat you has to wuk lak a dray horse to entertain. You ax 'em a question an' dey says yes or no,

an' den you ax 'em anodder an' dey says yes or no, an' you ax 'em anodder an' dey says yes or no, an' by dat time you's got to feel lak you is de census man, inquirin' into deir fambly history, which you ain't got no interest in knowin', an' so you takes yo' foot in yo' hand an' leaves 'em.

"Naw, sir, you don't heah 'bout nobody dat's got de gift of silence bein' pressed to come to dinner, or pay anybody a visit. 'Cou'se, maybe dese folks think dat folks will think dey's powerful wise, an' dat's de reason dey ain't got no time to chatter, but dey don't fool nobody. We knows dat de reason dat folks don't talk is dat dey's so stupid dey ain't got nothin' to say. Dey ain't full of surgin' thoughts. Dey's just as empty-haided as a gourd.

"Maybe women talks too much 'bout nothin', but my lan', did you ever go to a house dat had one of dese silent women in hit —one of dem women whut don't peep to de canary bird, nor goo-googly-goo over de baby, an' dat could go to fo' sewin'-societies an' de missionary-meetin', an' come home widout one single piece of news to tell? Talk 'bout de

cemetery! Hit ain't a bit lonesomer, nor stiller, nor duller dan dat sort of a silent woman's house. Nobody ever laughs in dat woman's house. Nobody ever sets roun' de table after supper. Dey des gobbles an' gits as fast as dey can. Nobody else can't talk whar de mistress of de house don't talk, an' you'll always find dat woman's husban' of a evenin' at de corner grocery a-lappin' up conversation dat he was a-thirstin' for an' didn't git at home.

"Maybe we women sometimes say cruel things dat stab lak a knife, but dere ain't nothin' on dis earth dat can wound lak silence. Yo' enemy can say dat you is dat mean dat you would steal de pennies off a dead man's eyes. Dat hurts, but hit don't hurt lak de silence of yo' friend dat stands by an' don't raise his voice in yo' defense.

"I's a woman dat loves to talk, an' I suttenly does git cold feet when I thinks dat maybe de Recordin' Angel is puttin' down all de things dat I has said in idleness, an' in temper, an' in nerves, but, you believe me, de things dat I repents of most is not whut I has said, but de things dat I ain't said, an' dat I

might have said, dat would have softened de hard way of life for de folks I is met up wid.

"One time my ole man Ike, he got mighty sick an' he go down to de very aidge of de stream whar I could heah de black waters of death lappin' up 'bout him. An' I set by his bed a-holdin' his hand, dat was limp an' cold in mine, an' my mind got to runnin' on all de long yeahs dat we had been married. An' I thought of de times when I s'picioned dat he was segasuatin' roun' wid dat Ma'y Jane Jones, an' of de times when he sneaked off to de lodge of a evenin', an' of how I had lambasted him for hit, an' I sholy did repent all de things dat I had said to him on dem occasions. But de thing dat I went down on my knees an' axed his forgiveness for was de fact dat I had kept silent 'bout how much I loved him, an' 'bout how grand an' noble I thought he was, an' dat in my eyes dem heroes dat dey pin medals on ain't got nothin' on de man whut spends his days toilin' for de support of his wife an' chillun, an' dat don't git nothin' out of all of his labor, but des his board an' his clothes—an' dey de homeliest in de household."

S I L E N C E

"Speech is silver, silence is gold, Sis Mirandy," says Br'er Jinkins to me.

"Don't you belieb hit," 'spons I; "silence is lead, an' hit crushes de life an' de joy out of all of dem dat hit falls on."

THE STUDY OF MANKIND

"SIS MIRANDY," says Sis Luellen to me de odder day, "is you heard 'bout dat new club dat some of dem high-browed ladies, whut you reads 'bout in de papers, is done organized for de study of mankind?"

"De which?" I axes.

"A club for de study of mankind," 'splains Sis Luellen. "De paper says dat dey thinks dat de reason dat women has so little luck in ketchin' husbands in dese days, an' so much trouble in keepin' 'em after dey does ketch 'em, is becaze women ain't never done made a scientific study of mankind. So dey's gwine to delve into de mighty masculine intellek, an' try to fathom de mysteries of de masculine mind."

"Well," 'sclaims I, "I wish 'em joy of deir job, but dey sholy is got deir wuk cut out for 'em, for de ain'tness of de why ain't nowhar to de wharfo'ness of de when, wid a man. Dere ain't no odder nation of people dat has got as many curis peculiarities as men. Now, a woman, you always know whut she's gwine to do, an' which-a-way de cat is gwine to jump wid her, but nobody can prognosticate a man an' tell when he's gwine to quit cuttin' up an' take to carryin' on."

"Dish heah idee of studyin' man ain't no new thing," say Sis Luellen wid a discontemptuous snort. "We women has been doin' dat ever sence de days of de Gyarden of Eden, for our livin' depended on hit, an' whedder we got chicken fixin's an' flower bonnets, or took in washin' to buy our own po'k chops an' caliker wrappers turned on whedder we guessed de right answer to de conundrum or not.

"But yit we don't know de fust principles 'bout how de mind of a man wuks hits wonders to perform. We don't even know how to ketch 'em, for dey talks one way, an' acts anodder."

"Amen! Dat's so," 'spons I. "Des listen

to a man talk 'bout the scandalous way dat women dresses in dese heah see-more clothes dat dey's flauntin' deyselfs 'roun' in. To hear him expostulate you suttenly would think dat de way to please him would be for a gal to be dressed in nice, warm, sensible clothes dat come up to her neck, an' down to her heels, an' for her to put her faith in red flannel underwear, instid of pink an' blue ribbon longery.

"But after a man has done winded hisself lambastin' de fool way women dresses, when he goes out anywhere he picks out de fluffiest bunch of dry goods to take along wid him dat he can find. Yassum, a man wouldn't be caught daid walkin' up de street wid a woman dat was dressed accordin' to his ideal of de way a woman should dress.

"An' men is always promulgatin' 'bout dese nice domestic gals dat stays at home, an' cooks, an' sews, an' washes, an' irons, an' dey says dat dey is de kind of women to pick out for wives. But dey never picks 'em. Hit's de gal dat's a-hangin' over de front fence while her ma wrastles wid de cook-stove, an' dat keeps her hands in a nice, soft, squeezable con-

"HE PICKS OUT DE FLUFFIEST BUNCH OF DRY GOODS HE CAN FIND"

dition instid of roughin' 'em up wid de scrubbin'-brush, dat gits de man dat spiels de loudes' 'bout domesticity.

"Nawm, I tells my daughter never to be took in by men's talk 'bout whut a woman should be, an' whut she shouldn't be, for men talk 'bout women jest to hear deir heads rattle. Dey's a-huntin' for de shrinkin' violet, but dey don't never find it unless de violet is got sense enough to put herself in deir way so dey can't help fallin' over her and breakin' deir necks.

"Dat's de reason hit's so hard to catch a husband. You don't know whedder to act bold or modest; whedder to talk foolish or sensible; whedder to dress lak you was de president of de Dorcas S'ciety, or lak you's jest 'scaped from de bug-house. An' de man's conversation on de subject don't give you no tip, becaze whilst he's strong on doctorin', he's weak on performin', an' you never can tell which turn of de road he's gwine to take when he goes a-cou'tin'.

"I'se done seed smart men marry gals dat didn't have enough sense to lead a blind goose to water, an' dey was puffectly happy. An'

I'se done seed men marry women whut was dat triflin' an' no account dat dey wouldn't make up deir own beds, an' deir husbands had to come home at night an' cook de supper after doin' deir day's wuk, an' yet deir husbands went 'bout as ca'm an' saterfied as ef dey done drawed a glory ticket when dey got married. An' I done seed odder men dat was married to women whut wuked deir fingers to de bone for 'em, and whut was good, an' sweet, an' patient, an' dese men would come home, an' beat up deir anjil wives, an' leave 'em, an' go traipsin' off after gay young gals."

"Dat's right," 'spons Sis Luellen, "an' the mo' you live wid a man, de less you knows 'bout him. Me an' Si, we's been married gwine on thuty yeahs, an' I's been a-studyin' him all dat time, an' to dis day I ain't found out why, when I has po'k chops for supper, he always axes me why I didn't have a pot roast, nor why, when I have a pot roast, he wants to know why I didn't have po'k chops. I hopes dat dem ladies whut's gwine to investigate de wukings of de masculine mind will tell de rest of we-all women why a man's mind wuks in dat particler way, for I sho' is curis to know.

"Den Si, he knows dat I's one of dese heah women dat would like to be soft soaped, an' told dat she suttenly was de yallow rose of Texas, an' dat de fatter she got de better she looked, an' dat she sholy did have a master-hand at cookin', an' dat de way she squeezed a nickel to git de most out of hit made de buffalo on hit hump hisself. Yassum, Si knows dat ef he'd des hand me a little taffy lak dat, dat hit would tickle me nearly to death, an' I'd go 'roun' singin' lak a funnygraph.

"An' deep down in his heart, I believe dat Si thinks all dem things 'bout me dat I would give ten yeahs of my life to hear, but does he ever say 'em? Nawm. Corkscrews couldn't draw a compliment for me out of him. He could make me happy by des sayin' a few words, but he won't do hit. I hope dat's anodder thing dat dem explorers of de masculine mind will find out.

"An' Si, he's a able-bodied man whut can do a day's wuk widout turnin' a hair, but when hit comes to takin' care of de baby for a Sunday evenin' when I goes to visit my ma, he's des dat frazzled out dat he has to go to bed to rest up. Yet he's always a-tellin' me how

thankful I ought to be dat I don't have to wuk hard lak he does, an' don't have nothin' to do but des to stay at home an' take care of de chillun, an' do de cookin', an' de washin', an' de ironin', an' de scrubbin', an' de sewin', an' de patchin'. I gits up an hour earlier in de mawnin' dan he does, an' wuks fo' hours later at night, for I ain't got no union hours.

"But Si says I don' know whut a cinch I'se got, an' dat makes me trust dat dem ladies whut's gwine to git at de true inwardness of a man's mind will find out how he figgers hit out dat hit's des play for a woman to wuk eighteen hours a day, an' dat she orter be down on her knees thankin' her husband for givin' her dat sort of a job, instid of pesterin' him to buy her a new hat, an' thinkin' dat maybe he might be real kind an' give her a quarter to spen' on herself.

"Yassum," goes on Sis Luellen, "dem ladies whut's gwine to explore de undiskivered country of de masculine mind sho is got a big job befo' 'em."

"Well," says I, "dere's one thing dat always makes me believe dat men is got mo' sense dan we women has."

"Whut's dat?" axes Sis Luellen.

"De way dey's kept us fooled for all dese yeahs 'bout bein' so much smarter dan we is," 'spons I.

THE MOTHERS' UNION

"SIS MIRANDY, ma'am," says Sis Petunia to me de odder day as she sunk down into a rockin'-cheer an' panted a few pants, bein' as how she is a hefty lady wid a sca'city of breath, "Sis Mirandy," she says, "I des took my foot in my hand, dis mawnin', an' stepped around to yo' house to ax you if you would unite wid us in de Mothers' Union dat we is organizin', an' give us de right hand of fellowship."

"I ain't much of a jiner," 'spons I, sort of cautious lak, 'case befo' dis I done been roped into bein' one of de charter members of a "Sassiety to Permote de Sperrit of Lovin' Kindness," which busted up in a row an' a hair-pullin' match owin' to de president havin' tuck all de money in de treasury to buy herse'f

a new set o' chainey teeth, an' dat done made me sorter s'picious of clubs. Hit shorely has.

"I knows you ain't one of dem women what has got so many sassiety badges on dey don't have to wear no odder clothes, sca'cely," says Sis Petunia, "but de Mothers' Union, dat's different. Hit fills a long-felt want, for why-for should all de odder laborers in de world have deir unions an' de hardest-worked trade in de world have none?

"Hit wa'n't ontil de cyarpenters an' de plumbers an' de bricklayers an' all de balance of 'em jined de union dat dey got a eight-hour day an' mo' pay, an' maybe when we mothers git up a Mothers' Union we won't have to wuk eighteen hours a day for our vittles an' clothes —an' dem de wust in de fambly. For ain't hit de mother dat wears de made-over frocks an' eats what is left in de dish after she done helped de chillun?"

"Hit's a gran' plan, Sis Petunia," 'spons I, "but de only trouble wid hit is dat hit won't wuk, an' hit won't wuk becase ev'y mother is a scab. You think any woman is gwine to walk out on a strike an' leave her own chillun to shift for deyselves becase some odder woman's

chillun is overwukin' an' under-payin' deir ma? Dat dey ain't!

"You think any woman is gwine to stop walkin' her baby wid de colic becase de clock done strike an' her eight-hour day is over? No, ma'am! She's gwine to start on anudder lap around de room wid dat squallin' brat over her shoulder, an' she ain't gwine to charge overtime for hit, nuther.

"You think any woman is gwine to stop in de midst of gettin' supper for her hungry fambly jist becase her time's up? You know she ain't, becase de only clock dat a mother ever hears tick is des de beatin' of her own heart, an' she don't count de time nor de wuk dat she does for her chillun. An' she don't spec no pay. An' she is des built dat way, an' nobody but Gawd Almighty can change her plans an' specifications.

"But I ain't got nothin' to say ag'inst de Mothers' Union. Hit's a gran' idee, an' I wisht dat we could git all de mothers to stand togedder, for ef dey did, maybe we would have enough backbone, de lot of us, to fight our chillun a little and make 'em do what we knows dey ought to do, instid of lettin' 'em do

lak dey pleases becase odder people's chillun is doin' dat way.

"De trouble wid a mother's influence is dat hit's kind of weak in hits action an' feeble in hits grip. Hit wuks all right at close range, an' whilst you has got yo' chile right under yo' eye in yo' own house, but des as soon as yo' chillun gits 'way from home, mother's influence begins to peter out and lose hits effect on deir systems, an' dey begins to do de things an' think de things dat all de odder chillun is doin' an' thinkin'.

"Hit don't do much good for me to keep my back yard clean, Sis Petunia, if de woman next door is runnin' a pig-sty, an', similar lak, I can't make much headway lambastin' my chillun into de straight an' narrow path if my neighbor is lettin' her chillun segasuate down de broad road.

"For chillun is copy-cats, an' what one does de odder is boun' to do. An' mo' dan dat, dey ain't no young gal or boy dat don't think dat deir ma is too old and feeble-minded to know what's de proper thing, an' dat de real fountain of wisdom is de odder boys an' gals dey runs wid.

"Now you take dis here way dat de gals ondresses nowadays when dey goes to a party. My lan', when I sees my Ma'y Jane start out to show herse'f in public in a frock dat is cut C in de front an' V in de back, an' nought under de arms, I blushes until I's dat hot dat I feels lak I was sizzlin' on de cook-stove, but can I stop her? I can not, becase ev'y mother's daughter is gwine to de ball in de same kind of a low-naked gown.

"An' when I sees Ma'y Jane a-dancin' dese new-fangled dances, I feels lak yellin' for de perlice, but I can't make her quit dancin' 'em becase all de odder gals is dancin' de same way, an' she's got to do lak de balance of dem or paper de wall.

"But ef all de mothers was united, and de Amalgamated Order of Mothers put hits big, broad-soled foot down flat on indecent clothes an' vulgar dancin', dey could stop hit in one day.

"You better believe me, dat dere ain't nothin' dat de Sisterhood of Chillun Raisers couldn't do ef dey would act togedder, for in de little black bags on de arms of fat, waddlin', grizzle-haided, middle-aged women is de

money dat runs de world. An' no storekeeper wouldn't bring on de kind of frocks dem women wouldn't buy for deir daughters, an' no restaurant man would keep de kind of a place dey wouldn't let deir chillun go to.

"Yassum, de Mothers' Union sholy could bring on de millennium—mo' specially in matermony, which is de place whar most of us finds ole Man Trouble waitin' for us, an' whar we gits hit in de neck.

"S'pose ev'y mother in de world, when she took her first look at her new-born baby, remembered dat she had done took a oath to stand by ev'y odder mother in de world!

"So she would say to herse'f: 'I don't want to have de tears of a sister member of de Mothers' Union on my soul, so I's gwine to raise dis gal baby up to be a good, faithful, industrious wife to some man.' Or she would say: 'I'se gwine to raise dis boy up so he'll be a tender, generous, considerate husband to some gal, an' dereby save some odder mother from breakin' her heart over de way her daughter is treated by de man she is had de misfortune to tie up wid.'

"Yassum, de Mothers' Union certainly

could improve de output of husbands and wives which we mothers is turnin' out now, an' in which ev'y woman tries to gold-brick de odder woman an' onload a triflin', good-for-nothin' gal on some meek, patient, industrious man or dump a selfish, grouchy, loafin' man on a gal dat will support him.

"Yassum, I tell you dere's mighty few of us dat would lak to see our sons marry gals lak our own daughters, an' dat don't pray de Lawd to deliver our daughters from de kind of husbands dat we's raised up for some odder gal.

"Yassum, de Mothers' Union is suttenly got a grand future befo' hit—an' plenty of wuk cut out for hit. An' I wisht dat ev'y mother in de land would jine hit."

HOW MEN PROPOSE

"WELL, Sis Mirandy," prognosticates Sis Hannah Jane to me as we was a-confabulatin' togedder de odder day, "I declar' to gracious, I don't know whut women is comin' to. Dey is progressin' so fast, an' so fur, dat hit looks lak to me sometimes dat dey's progressin' backwards.

"Fust dey wanted de vote. Den dey wanted to wear de breeches, an', bless goodness, ef dey ain't got whut looks lak one leg of de pants on 'em, an' is a-flirtin' hit aroun' on de streets, an' callin' hit a skirt. An' now heah's a piece in de paper dat says dat de women in Sweden are demandin' to have de law give 'em de right to pop de question to a man, an' ax him to marry 'em, becaze dey say dat when a man

proposes he looks so ugly an' awkward an' meachin'."

"Huh," 'sclaims Sis Alviry, whut is a ole maid dat's been a-settin' on de anxious seat for de las' fifteen years, "so fur as I can see, hit's de quantity an' not de quality of proposals dat needs improvin'."

"Dat's right," 'spons I, "any kin' of love-makin' sounds good from de right man."

"Of cou'se, of cou'se. Dat's de true word dat you has spoke, Sis Mirandy," agrees Sis Hannah Jane. "Still, dere ain't any woman dat was ever bawn dat didn't hone right down in de bottom of her soul to have some man make love to her des lak dey does hit in books an' on de stage; an' hit sho am discouragin', after you has done wuked lak a dray horse to drag a man up to de proposin'-p'int, to have him give a gulp or two, lak his Adam's apple was tryin' to choke him, an' den for him to ax you to marry him lak he was axin' you to pass de butter.

"Cou'se, Sis Mirandy, I ain't a-sayin' dat you ain't glad an' thankful to take him, ef so be he's a man wid a steady job, an' one dat looks lak he wouldn't give you no back talk;

but even when you want a thing dere's a difference, Sis Mirandy, betwixt havin' hit handed to you on a silver salver wid a wreath of flowers aroun' hit, an' havin' hit chucked at yo' haid."

"You sho am talkin' now, Sis Hannah Jane," says I. "Ev'y time a man pops de question to a woman she busts into tears. De man thinks dat she's cryin' wid joy becaze he's done come across at las' an' she's got such a good thing as him; but whut she's a-weepin' over is de way he done bungle things an' knocked de socks off'n all de romance. Ever sence she's been a little gal she's been a-thinkin' 'bout some man comin' along an' fallin' in love wid her, an' axin' for her hand in marriage in high-falutin' language dat she'll be proud to remember an' brag 'bout to de longest day she lives. An' when de thing does happen, hit's des as onnery an' commonplace as buyin' a peck of potatoes.

"She's thought dat de man would pour out a lot of love talk dat jes' burned an' sizzled, an' den dat he would clutch her to his manly bosom in a way dat would loosen her black hair, an' dat he would swear dat all de powers

of darkness could not tear her away from him. Dat's whut she's been a-lookin' forward to hearin'; an' whut he says is, dat he's done found a nice two-room flat wid stationary washtubs an' a gas-stove, an' dat he'll stand for de rent of hit ef she wants to tie up wid him."

"Dat's de reason de movies gits all my money," sighs Sis Araminty. "I goes to see men make love on de stage as hit should be did, becaze I knows I'll never see hit done dat way in real life."

"I wonder," says Sis Hannah Jane, wid a far-away look in her eye, "whut hit is dat makes a man turn pale aroun' de gills, an' trimble an' stutter, an' fall over his own feet when he goes to ax a woman to marry him."

"Huh," says Ike, who had been a-listenin' to us, "hit's becaze he knows dat he is a-gettin' hisself into trouble, an' he's a-wrastlin' wid his guardeen angel dat's makin' one las' effort to hold him back an' save him. Believe me, Sis Hannah Jane, dere's many a man done wish dat when he started to pop de question his tongue had done stuck to de roof of his mouth so he never could have got hit down

ag'in. Yassum, ef dere's one time dat a man gits punished for talkin' too much, hit is when he tackles dis heah proposin' proposition.

"I ain't a-sayin' dat a man don't look lak a human shrimp when he pops de question, becaze he does; an' he feels lak one, only not so intelligent; but love-makin' ain't no business for a able-bodied man to be engaged in, an' you take hit from me dat any man whut can make love widout lookin' an' actin' as 'shamed as a sheep-killin' dog, is done had too much experience. He done said dat thing over to so many women dat he's done learned hit by heart, an' when you gits one of dese heah proposals tied up wid a blue ribbon, you'd better keep yo' eye on hit, 'caze hit's mighty apt to git away from you.

"Mo'over," goes on Ike, "ef de women folks thinks dat dey can make love better dan de men does, let 'em go to hit, says I. As for me, I ain't nowise opposed to a sweet young thing wid a straight-front figger an' soulful eyes a-leadin' me out into de moonlight, an' a-holdin' my han', an' tellin' me how noble an' gran' an' handsome I is, an' how her heart

begins to flop aroun' in her bosom de minnit she sets eyes on me. An' ef she wants to quote any poetry to me, I'se ready an' willin' to listen as long as she nestles my han' in her little flapper an' spiels along. Nuther is I got any objections to her kneelin' at my feet, ef she wants to do hit, dough how any young female is gwine to do de kneelin' act in dese heah snake-skin skirts gits me."

"De hussy!" 'sclaims I. "Des let me ketch any gal a-makin' love to you, an' dere sho is gwine to be wuk for de horspital!"

"Oh, bein' a married man, I was des speakin' paragorically, ole lady," 'spons Ike. "Cou'se I wouldn't encourage no young woman to make love to me, onless she was des a-practisin' up de best way to pop de question to some odder man. Nuther is I a-sayin' dat women wouldn't improve de output of love talk ef dey did de proposin', becaze women is dat long on talk, anyway, dat ef one of 'em set her mind on marryin' a man, she'd argify him into doin' hit, whedder he wanted to or not. He'd say yes des to shut her up."

"Sis Mirandy," says Sis Hannah Jane, "does you believe dat ef women did de pro-

posin' dey'd pop de question mo' poeticaller dan men does?"

"I don't know 'bout dat, Sis Hannah Jane," I 'spons. "Dey might not propose better dan men, but dey'd do hit oftener!"

OUR NEIGHBORS

"DERE'S one woman dat I sholy does envy, an' dat is Eve, becaze she didn't have no neighbors.

"Yassum, she suttenly was a lucky woman, an' she sholy must 'a' led a peaceable an' happy life, an' had money in de bank, wid no lady acrost de street a-spyin' on her clothesline on wash days to see how often she changes de table-cloth an' whedder her fambly wears longery or jist underclothes.

"Yassum, I 'specks in de millennium dat Br'er Jinkins is always expostulatin' 'bout, ev'y one of us will have a little world of our own, where we kin be des as lazy, an' as slouchy, an' as shiftless, an' as comfortable, an' happy as we kin be, wid nobody to bodder us, or make us come up to de scratch.

"Becaze hit's our neighbors dat we'se slaves to. Hit's our neighbors dat we wuks for, an' inches, an' pinches, an' scrinches for, an' pertends to be whut we ain't.

"An' de funny part of hit all is, dat dey is jest as skeered of us as we is of dem, an' yit neider one of us dars turn our back an' do as we pleases for fear we'll git hit in de neck from de odder one.

"Yassum, when I dies I hopes an' prays dat I'll go to a place whar I'll be forty million miles away from de nex' angel, an' whar dere won't be nobody to squint at my halo, an' remark dat hit's too big for me, an' dey wonders how I happened to git hit anyway, an' dat dey sholy am surprised to see dat Sis Mirandy has been showed to a back seat, instid of settin' up in de front row 'mongst de elect.

"Yassum, I suttenly do git tired of spendin' my time an' my money tryin' to please folks dat I don't keer nothin' at all 'bout, in de place of indulgin' myself in de things dat I wants, an' hones to do.

"An' I gits tired of lyin' to folks dat knows I'se lyin', an' don't believe whut I tell 'em, any mo' dan I believes de things dat dey tells

me. But, my lan', ef you'd tell de truth now you'd be ruined, for ev'ybody scales down whut you say so much dat ef you didn't talk big, dere wouldn't be nothin' lef'.

"Dat's whut makes me tell Sis Hannah Jane dat de reason dat I takes in washin' is becaze de doctor says dat dere ain't nothin' for givin' you a straight front figger, an' removin' a double chin lak de up an' down motion of bendin' over de washtub. An' Sis Hannah Jane, she respon' dat de reason dat dey don't have nothin' but a cold piece of bread for breakfast is becaze a meat diet is too heatin' for her fambly, an' coffee makes 'em dat nervous dat hit gives 'em de trimbles.

"Cou'se in her mind, Sis Hannah Jane is a-sayin' to herself dat she 'specks Ike mus' spend mo' money at de lodge dan he does on his wife an' chillun, ef I has to let on dat I takes in washin' for exercise. An' I'se a-prognosticatin' to myself dat Sis Hannah Jane mus' be so po' dat hit won't be long tell she's passin' roun' de hat, but we bof' look at each odder lak butter wouldn't melt in our moufs, an' pertends dat we is tucken in by each odder.

"Yassum, hit's our neighbors dat makes us do all de fool things dat we dos. Whut you reckon made me buy dat mellojum dat I'se been payin' for on de installment for fo' years, when de only instrument dat I kin perform on is de cook-stove? You reckon I wanted dat contrapshun dat ain't no yearthly use 'cepen to ketch dust, when I was a-needin' a flannel petticoat an' a pair of stockin's widout no holes in 'em?

"Nawm, dat I didn't. Pussonally, I ain't got no mo' use for a mellojum dan a fish has for a umbrella, an' dere was forty-leven different things dat I wanted an' wanted bad, dat I could 'a' bought wid dat money, but I had to buy hit for de neighbors. An' dat's why I put de money dat had oughter bought me a new clothes wringer to save my back into a red plush album for de centre table in de parlor, an' why I bought a painted chainy vase to set in de front window, when I was a-settin' propped up in a broken-legged cheer in de kitchen.

"De Lawd knows dat hit is bad enough to have to spend yo' money on yo' neighbors, but dat ain't de wust of hit. Dey is always

a-snookin' an' a-snoopin' around, pryin' into folkses private affairs, as ef hit was any business of deirs ef a gentleman come home tanked up wid red eye an' beat his wife, or a woman, whut is a perfect lady, got riled wid her husband an' pitched things at him.

"I mind dat one time dat me an' Ike was havin' a little argyment, an' maybe we did pass a few plates an' things an' de fust news we knowed de neighbors had done bus' down de do' and rush in, an' hit tuck me an' Ike bof' to throw 'em out an' give 'em a hint dat while we was sociable an' friendly, we warn't gwine to have any neighbors interfering in our fambly diversions.

"But dat got us de name of bein' upperty, for ef dere is one thing dat neighbors won't stand, hit is for anybody to keep deir own business to deirselfs. All you got to do to git de name of bein' a jail bird, an' havin' fo' husbands livin' round in different parts of de country, an' of dodgin' de rent collector, is not to spend yo' time relatin' whar you has lived, an' who you is kin to, an' how much money you makes.

"But dere is one thing 'bout neighbors dat

is a good thing, I reckon, an' dat is dat dey makes us toe de mark. My lan', but dere's many a time I wouldn't sweep under de bed ef I wasn't fraid dat Sis Tempy mought drap in for a call, an' dat I'd let little Teddy Rooster-felt go dirty an' comfortable instid of riggin' him up in one of dese heah bustin' Brown clothes ef I wasn't skeered dat de neighbors would say dat I was neglectin' my chillen. An' of a night, when Ike comes home from de pra'r-meetin' 'bout midnight, an' says dat de reason dat he stayed so late was becaze dey had a mighty refreshin' season, an' de spirit was wid 'em, de thing dat keeps me from sayin' des whut I thinks to him, an' makes me drap my voice to a whisper, is de knowledge dat Sis Susannah has got her ear glued to de petition wall, a-listenin' to find out ef I lives up to my reputation as a meek, humble Christian wife.

"But, all de same, I sho' does envy Eve becaze she didn't have no neighbors, an' I 'specks dat de reason dat dey call de garden of Eden Paradise was becaze dere warn't no back door neighbor, a-runnin' in wid a shawl over her head, to peek in de market basket, an' see

whut she was gwine to have for dinner, an' ef she bought butter by de pound, or de nickel's wuth.

"Yassum, ef de sarpent lef' any chillen in dis world, hit was de back door neighbor. Ev'y time a woman gits dat famillious wid me dat she feels lak she kin run in widout knockin' an' count de po'k chops on de cook-stove, an' take a hand in de fambly scraps, I packs up an' moves on.

"An' I'se been a-movin' from de back door neighbor all my life—an' I ain't never got rid of her yit. I'se still a-movin'."

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

"De odder night Br'er Jinkins was at our house, an' he was expostulatin' 'bout dem folks dat is tryin' to git a law passed taxin' ev'y old bachelor enough to support a ole maid.

"'Well,' 'sclaims I, 'I hopes to gracious dat dey does hit, for de Lawd knows dat hit looks lak hit takes a sheriff an' a posse to drive a man to de altar in dese days, an' dat de only way to git one into de holy estate is to have de law on him ef he stays out of de fold.'

"'Marriage is a life sentence at hard labor,' 'spons Ike, 'an' ef a man is foxy enough to keep from gittin' caught, I don't see what right de government has got to hand him a jail-ticket, anyway. I call dat playin' hit

pretty low down on a feller, an' interferin' wid his pussonal liberty, an' discouragin' prudence in de young.'

"'Hit is de principle of our government to tax de luxuries of life, an' not de necessities,' says Br'er Jinkins in de tone of voice dat he uses in de pulpit, 'an' darfore hit's nothin' but right dat dem bachelors whut has got de privilege of deir freedom should be made to pay for hit.'

"'Oh,' 'spons Ike, a kind of avoidin' my eye, 'caze me an' him had des had a family set-to in which he had come out at de little end of de horn, 'I ain't a-disputin' dat a bachelor hadn't orter pay for de right to be a bachelor, for hit suttenly is wuth de price.'

"'Dis heah talk of taxin' bachelors brings out one curious peculiarity,' says Br'er Jinkins, 'an' dat is dat ev'ybody is down on de onmarried man an' is got hit in for him, whilst dey is sloshin' over wid pity for de onmarried woman. Even de Scriptures leans dat way, for de Good Book is full of promises an' comforts for widders, but hit ain't got nary a word dat promises cheer for de widower.'

"'Humph,' 'spons I, 'de Lawd knows dat

dere warn't no use in wastin' words of comfort on de widower, 'caze he kin comfort himself. When a widow woman is left wid six small chilluns, an' no insurance money, dere ain't nothin' left for her but de consolations of religion. But a widow man may have forty-leven teethin' babies, an' de rheumatiz, an' de string-halt in his knee, an' no job, yit he kin marry de prettiest gal in de chu'ch de fust time he makes a pass at her. I done seen hit done many a-times!'

"'Talkin' 'bout dis marryin' business,' says Ike in a mournful voice, 'dere's some folks dat ain't got enough sense to know when dey is well off, an' is jest natcherally bound to go out an' hunt for trouble.'

"'Dere's one thing,' 'spons I, 'an' dat is dat ef dat law makin' ev'y ole bachelor support a ole maid is ever passed, hit'll be a mighty pow'ful encourager of matermony.'

"'How so?' axes Br'er Jinkins.

"'Becaze,' answers I, 'dere ain't no woman in de world dat a man can support as cheap as he can his wife, an' when dem men finds out dat dey is got to put up for de board an' clothes of some woman dere'll be a grand

scramble for marriage licenses. Dey'll all want to git in on de ground floor whar dey can do hit on de bargain-counter plan.

"'Yassir,' I goes on, wid a meanin' look at Ike, 'I's knowed of cases whar befo' marriage a man stuffed a woman on ice-cream, an' pink lemonade, an' took her to de show, an' give her a silk frock, an' after dey was married she thought dat she was mighty lucky ef she got po'k chops, an' a caliker dress, an' a chanst to go to pra'r-meetin' onct a week.'

"'Yassir, dem pictures in de almanac of "befo' an' after takin'" sholy is a fambly portrait of most married folks. Before dey is married dey is spry an' all dressed up, an' cheerful lookin', an' after dey is married dey is kind of seedy, an' weavely, an' is wearin' yeah-befo'-last clothes, an' a mournful look.

"'De money whut is spent on women goes to de sweethearts an' not de wives, an' many a woman has to wuk as long as she lives to pay for de presents dat her husband give her befo' dey was married.'

"'Yassir, I'se seed many a man dat expected his wife to wear de same bonnet fo' fo'

yeahs becaze he gave her a plush album when he was a-cou'tin' her. Dat's whut makes me say dat ef dem skinflint ole bachelors whut has been too pisen-stingy to git married of deirselves, an' help a po' lady out on her shoppin' ticket, finds out dat dey'll have to suppo't a woman anyway, dat dey'll all hustle to git married, becaze marriage is cheap.'

"'As for me,' says Br'er Jinkins, who is got a wife who is a Tartar, an' dat ain't a gentle, meek, long-sufferin' woman lak I is, 'as for me, I don't hold wid de passin' of no such laws. Let dem men, whut is got gumption enough to stay single, git deir reward.'

"'Dere ain't nothin' in dis world,' 'spons Ike, ''ceptin' havin' a eye tooth pulled, dat goes ag'inst a man's grain an' hut's as bad as payin' taxes, anyway, an' I sholy do feel for dem bachelors dat'll have to pay for de privilege of not bein' married.'

"'Dey won't know de blessin' dey's gittin', never havin' experienced de aggrefrettiness of matermony,' 'spons Br'er Jinkins. 'You'd think dey would jest be prancin' up to de tax office, wreathed in smiles, to git a chance to pay for deir freedom, but you'll see dat dey'll

moan, an' groan, an' try to dodge hit des lak dem millionaires does 'bout de income tax.'

"'My goodness,' 'sclaims Ike, 'but I jes' wisht dat de tax-gatherer would be a houndin' me to pay de income tax.'

"'Dat so. Same heah,' 'spons Br'er Jinkins, 'an' dat's de way hit's gwine to be 'bout dis heah bachelor tax. A man orter be willin' to pay for de privilege of comin' home in de early hours of de mawnin', an' not findin' a lady waitin' up for him, wid a piece of kindlin' in one hand, an' a flat iron in de odder, an' her opinion of his conduc' all thought out. But he ain't, an' he's gwine to kick like a steer when dey assesses de price of his freedom.'

"'Humph,' 'spons I, 'maybe dey ain't made de ole bachelor pay in money for de price of his freedom, but all de same he pays. Ev'y man dat ain't married, pays for not bein' married in loneliness, becaze hit's better to be pulled over de coals for comin' home late dan it is to have nobody to care whedder you ever comes home or not.'

"'Maybe so,' says Br'er Jinkins, 'but hit must be mighty comfortable to be able to do

as you lak in yo' own house, an' dat's a luxury dat a ole bachelor orter be willing to put up his good money for.'

"'He does,' says I, 'for hit's better not to dare to put yo' feet on de mantelpiece, or smoke in de parlor, dan hit is to have nothin' but an empty chair across de table from you at dinner, an' to have nobody but de cat to talk to of an evenin'.'

"'A man dat don't have to suppo't a fambly sholy ought not to grumble 'bout payin' de bachelor tax,' puts in Ike.

"'He pays hit,' 'spons I, 'ev'y man dat never knows de clingin' arms of little chillun 'bout his neck has paid a price dat would send Mr. Rockinfeller to de po' house. Furdermo' a wife—des one of dese plain, fool women, dat ain't no livin' picture of beauty, an' dat ain't gwine to set de world on fire wid her sense, an' dat is got a temper, an' a tongue dat she's a little too free wid, but dat des loves some onnery little bandy-legged man so dat she thinks he is de smartest, and de handsomest man in all de wide world—is a mighty comfortin' thing for any man to have aroun' de house.'

"'Dat's so, ole woman,' says Ike, a-reachin' over an' grabbin' my han', an' I didn't say nothin' a little later when he segasuated off in de direction of de cigar store."

ADVICE TO MOTHERS

"HONEY, ain't it funny how de better advice soun's de wuss hit is?

"Now me, I des got back from one of dem Mother's Meetin's whar a lady of de single pusswasion, what ain't never had no pussonal 'sperience in de baby line, an' one of dese yeah pale, underdone, half-baked, three-hair-whisker men whut wouldn't know no mo' how to rastle wid de colic dan he would how to run a airship, spent two hours a-layin' down de law to us mothers 'bout how to bring up our chillen.

"Hit sho' wuz a privilege to be dere, an' listen to dem words of wisdom, becaze de only pusson dat knows des how a chile ought to be raised an' dat is got a never fail recipe for

doin' hit, is dem whut ain't wrastlin' wid de problems, an' dat ain't layin' awake of nights tryin' to settle in deir minds whedder de knock-down-an'-drag-out policy, or de moral 'suasion is best.

"Hit's a comfort dat we po', troubled mothers dat is got twins in de cradle, an' triplets under our feet, an' holdin' on to our frocks, whilst we cooks, an' washes, an' scrubs, has spinsters to 'spostulate to us 'bout des how to fetch 'em up. For we'se mighty mystified 'bout whedder we whipped when we hadn't ought to, or stayed our hands when we had ought to have spanked de life out of 'em, but when you listen to de advice of dese Mother's Helpers all de doubts des melts away. Hit sounds jes' as easy, an' plain as one of dem cook-book rules for makin' sponge cake dat says at de end, 'If you follow dis recipe, you can't fail.'

"Dat is de reason dat I always goes when I kin, an' I comes home mighty ca'm an' saterfied, to try to practice dem lovely views on my fambly. Den somethin' happens. I dunno just whut, but dere's a sort of slip-up somewheres. When I tries to appeal to my chil-

len's souls, I finds out dat dey ain't got nothin' but stomachs, an' dat de only way I kin make any impression on deir higher nature is wid de business end of a broomstick.

"Yassum, I ain't got no manner of doubt 'bout de value of de Mother Helper's idees—de only thing ag'inst dem is dat dey won't wuk. Leastwise on healthy chillen. I 'specks dat dey would be des de thing for a puny chile dat was kinder wormy lookin', an' dat had stringy curls, an' wus named Percy, but dem maiden ladies don't seem to have got much of a grip on how to knock de Ole Boy out of dem chillen whut is name Bill, an' Sal, an' dat kin eat six meals a day an' be always hongry between times, an' dat keeps you on de jump wonderin' whut new kind of badness dey is gwine to be in nex'.

"An' de trouble wid dem kind of chillen is dat dere ain't no two of 'em alike, an' de way dat wuks of managin' one of 'em don't wuk wid de odder one. Dere's some chillen dat you can tole into de straight an' narrow path, an' some dat you has to lambaste into hit wid a bed-slat.

"I kin praise Ma'y Jane into behavin' lak a

puffect lady, but when I pays Sally Ann a compliment hit gives her de swell head so bad dat dere ain' no livin' in de house wid her. When I turns Thomas Jefferson acrost my knees an applies de slipper whar hit does de mos' good, he gits up a regenerated sinner dat's so good an' sweet you mos' think dat you kin see his angel wings a-sproutin', but when I whips little Teddy Roosterfelt he sulks for a week, and de only reason he don't put pisen in de coffee is becaze he don't know how.

"Dat's whut makes me say whut I does—dat I is des sloshin' over wid respect for dem folks dat is got a rule for raisin' chillen dat is guaranteed to keep 'em off of de chain gang when dey grows up. 'Case I ain't got no plan on de subject dat's wuth shucks.

"Des las' time I went to one of de Mother's Meetin's dere was a mighty peart young woman, wid a silk dress trimmed wid real lace, an' a flower bonnet on, dat got up an' speechified 'bout how you ought never to say 'Must' to a chile. She said as how dat instid of givin' a chile a order to do anythin' dat you ought to des gently insinuate de matter to hit.

Furdermo' she say dat wuz de way to keep a chile from bein' disobedient, an' all de women in de audience clapped deir hands lak dey's heerd de good news of a new way, wid no wuk in hit, to manage chillen, for de reason dat mos' women don't make deir chillen behave deirself is becaze dey's too lazy to do hit.

"So, goin' on home dat evenin' Sis Hannah Jane, whut's got de rockin'-cheer habit, says to me:

"'Hit's a great thing, Sis Mirandy, dat we lives in dis day when we'se got de benefit of de advice of dem whut is given deir time to chile study to tell us how to bring up our offspring. I shudders at de mistakes I has been a-makin', for I has been a-sayin' "must" to my chillen all deir lives, but I is gwine to turn over a new leaf, an' from dis time on I'll des insinuate my desires to 'em. Ain't you?'

"'Dat I ain't,' 'spons I, 'as long as I's a able-bodied woman I's gwine to say "must" to mine an' see dat dey does hit, for life is dat full of "must" for all of us dat we can't get use to doin' whut we ought to, an' don't want to, any too soon.'

"'I's gwine to appeal to my Ulysses Sher-

man Algernon Grant's feelin's for me to keep him from gwine out of a night wid de boys,' says Sis Hannah Jane.

"'An' I's to appeal to Thomas Jefferson's feelin's for himself to keep him from gwine out to loaf at de corner, for ef he does, him an' me will have a little interview wid a hickory switch,' 'spons I, an' at dat Sis Hannah Jane says she grieves to see dat I ain't open to de new idees, but I took notice dat Thomas Jefferson spent de evenin' in de bosom of his fambly, whilst I sees Ulysses Sherman Algernon Grant a-saunterin' by my window.

"'But dere's one thing dat kinder troubles me,' Sis Hannah Jane went on, 'an' dat is whut dat soulful young man in de Mother's Meetin' says 'bout you always ought always to answer a chile's questions. I wants to live up to de light, but I laks de strength.'

"'Dat's so,' says I, 'now las' night my little Teddy Roosterfelt was a-learnin' his Sunday school lessons, an' he says, "Ma, who was Pa's Pa, an' who was his Pa, an' who was de Pa of de fus' him?"'

"'Anybody who can answer a chile's questions is welcome to,' 'spons Sis Hannah Jane.

"'Amen,' says I an' den I say kinder casual, 'Hit's mighty providential dat dem whut knows exactly how chillen ought to be brought up ain't got no chillen to show how deir idees wuks out.'"

THE BLESSINGS OF TROUBLE

YESTERDAY as I was a promulgatin' along home from de butcher-shop I done meet up wid Sis Chloe Johnsing, whut is one of dese heah skinny, lanky women, whut always wears a rusty black veil, an' de corners of her mouth turned down. Sis Chloe suttenly does look lak she was de Daughter of Sorrow an' took after her Pa, Ole Man Trouble, an' her voice when she talks sounds jes' lak cracked ice tinklin' ag'inst de sides of a tear-jug, an' makes you want to jine in an' weep wid her widout even axin' whar's de corpse. Yassum, Sis Chloe sholy am a gran' mourner, an' dey do say dat she's dat consistent dat she wears crêpe underwear an' don't drink nothin' but

black tea. Howsomever, seein' dat I had met up wid her, becaze she seed me fust, I stopped to pass de time of day wid her.

"Well, Sis Chloe," says I, "how does yo' symptoms seem to segasuate dis fine bright mawnin'?"

"I's enjoyin' po' health, Sis Mirandy," she says, an' her voice was dat mournful dat you could have cut her sorrows wid a knife.

"What has happened to you?" inquires I. "Is you done lost yo' husban', or is yo' canary bird got de pip?"

"Oh, Sis Mirandy," she 'spons, her voice a trimblin' lak a bowl of calf's-foot jelly, "I's a travelin' through de low grounds of trouble an' tribulation. Yas, Sis Mirandy, de hand of de Lawd suttenly am laid heavy on me. My husban' done lost his job, an' my baby's tooken down wid de measles, an' de whoopin'-cough, an' de chicken-pox, an' my oldest boy's done run in by de police, an' my gal, Elviry, done eloped wid dat bandy-laigged, no 'count Si Jones, so dat we got a son-in-law to suppo't, an' I's got de misery in my side, an' de rheumatics in my left shoulder, an' dere's fo' days'

dishes piled up in de sink at home waitin' to be washed."

"Bless Gawd for all His mercies," says I, "for you sholy is a lucky woman."

"Huccome you say dat, when I's marked for sorrow?" she axes me.

"Becaze," 'spons I, "you's got somethin' to worry about right at home widout havin' to go out an' hunt for hit, an' dat saves you lots of time an' trouble.

"Yassum," I goes on, "dem women suttenly is lucky whut has got a real live grievance already made, instid of havin' to make one for demselves out of whole cloth. Cou'se none of us ain't gwine to be happy—leastways no woman ain't—an' ef we ain't a-moanin' an' a-groanin' over one thing, we's a-weepin' an' a-wailin' over anodder, an' so you might jes' as well have real trouble of yo' own as to have to go out an' borrow hit.

"I's been a moseyin' aroun' dis world a good many yeahs, an' I ain't never found no happy pusson yit. Dat is, I ain't found no happy woman. I's seed a good many mighty cheerful men, whut was fresh widowers—an' bearin' de loss of deir wives wid Christian

resignation. But I ain't ever met no woman dat ain't had some secret sorrow dat she tole to ev'ybody, an' axed 'em to jine in deir tears wid hers. Which dey did ef dey was women. For women is a lot more perseverin' dan men, an' no matter how you fix 'em, dey'll hunt 'roun' till dey find somethin' to be miserable 'bout.

"Ef dey's ole maids, dey's sorrowful an' sad becaze dey ain't got no husbands, an' ef dey's married, dey's unhappy becaze dey ain't free an' is tied down to a man. Ef dey's got a husban' dat beats 'em, dey calls on us to lament wid 'em becaze dey's united to a brute, an' ef dey's got husbands whut's good an' kind to 'em, dey complains dat hit's sort of dull to have to live wid a man whut ain't got no sperrit. Ef dey has chillun, dey's always a-groanin' about havin' to walk de colic instid of gaddin' 'roun' to Saturday-night balls, an' ef dey ain't got no chillun, dey moans out dat deir hands is empty.

"Ef dey's got a job, dey think dey is persecuted becaze dey has to wuk for a livin', an' ef dey ain't got no job, dey expects to be pitied for bein' po', onfortunate critters whut

can't git nothin' to do. Ef dey ain't got no money, dey's miserable for fear folks won't lak 'em becaze dey's po', an' ef dey's rich, dey's wretched for fear people will lak 'em becaze dey's got money.

"Yassum, dat's de way hit goes wid women, an' so fur as I can see, a po', sickly woman, wid a drunken husban' an' 'leven little chillun to suppo't, is jes' as well off as a rich ole maid wid no husban', an' no troubles to bodder her. Ef she ain't got no real sorrow, she's gwine to hunt 'roun' ontel she finds somethin' dat she makes believe is one, so she'd jes' as well have de real one in de fust place. I reckon dat de reason dat de Lawd sends so many afflictions on women is dat He des got discouraged tryin' to make 'em happy, an' thought dat He'd let 'em enjoy bein' miserable in deir own way.

"An' yit happiness is des de way you look at a thing. Dere ain't nothin' in dis world dat ain't plum full of both misery an' fun, an' you can take whichever one of 'em you wants. Most folks takes de misery, becaze hit's on top an' de easiest to git at, but ef dey look under de bottom, dey finds out dat happiness is dere, too.

"One time one of dese heah oh-be-sorrowful-sisters come a-pityin' me.

"'It makes me weep,' says she, 'to see a pert, smart woman lak you is whut's tied down to a husban', an' can't sashay off wid us free women on de 'scursion.'

"'I specs de 'scursion is mighty enjoyable,' I 'spons, 'but a husban' is a handy thing to have aroun' de house, specially when de rent comes due.'

"'Hit's a pity,' she goes on, 'dat you didn't marry a fine-lookin', big husban' instid of tyin' up wid a runty little man lak Br'er Ike.'

"'Oh, I don't know,' 'spons I, 'de wuss lookin' a husban', de less reason a wife has to lay awake at night wonderin' ef somebody whut is younger an' spryer dan she is ain't gwine to tole him an' his pay away from de home fold.'

"'You has to wuk mighty hard,' says de woman wid a sad smile dat made me want to heave a brick at her.

"'Dat I does,' says I, 'but a better cook dan I is never passed a hand over de pot, an' de wuk keeps me well an' strong so dat I ain't

got no call to waste any money on de doctor.'

"'I see,' says she, a-squintin' at my market basket, 'dat you ain't got nothin' but po'k-chops for Sunday dinner, while Hannah Smith done got chicken.'

"'Dat's a fact,' I 'spons, 'but bless de Lamb, dere ain't no fedders on po'k-chops an' I don't have to pick 'em.'

"An' wid dat de woman went on her way, an' I heard dat she tole Sis Samanthy dat Sis Mirandy didn't have enough sense to know dat she was havin' a hard time in life.

"Yassum, dat's me. I ain't out huntin' for things to worry 'bout, an' ef Mr. Trouble gits me, he'll have to come after me, sho'. I ain't gwine half-way to meet him. But most women ain't never so happy as when dey's miserable, an' we ain't got no call to sympathize wid 'em when misfortune gits 'em by de scruff of de neck. Dey is havin' de time of deir lives when dey's got some trouble dat dey can prognosticate 'bout, an' dat's what makes me say whut I do—dat a woman dat's got a real, ready-made sorrer on her hand, instid of havin' to invent one, is playin' in big luck.

"Yassum, I guess de onhappiest woman in de world is de woman widout a secret sorrow dat she can talk 'bout all de time. Only dere ain't no sich a animal."

WIDOWS

SIS SAIRY ANN is one of dese heah onappropriated blessin's whut would make any man a good wife, an' dat ev'y man dat knows recommends to ev'y odder man, but don't grab off for hisself, an' las' night she come to my house an' she ain't mo' dan set herself down comfortable in a rockin'-chair before she says to me, "Sis Mirandy, is you done heah dat de Widder Johnsing is gwine to be married agin?"

"De lan's sakes!" sclaims I. "You don't say so! Marryin' is done got to be sech a habit wid dat woman dat she can't break herself of hit, fo' dis is de fo'th man she done toled to de altar."

"Dat's right," 'spons Sis Sairy Ann, gitting mo' an' mo' mournfuller, "an' hit's my opinion dat dere ought to be some way to have de law on dem women whut's a-runnin' a matermonial trust, an' a-snatchin' de weddin' rings right offen our hands, so to speak, an' makin' hit so dat no matter how hard an' industrious us po' single women wuks at catchin' a husban' we can't git one."

"Dat's so," puts in Ma'y Jane, whut's still a-roostin' on de anxious seat outside of de fold of matermony, "but de chu'ch is comin' to our help. Yesterday I was readin' in de paper 'bout a sermon dat a priest preached to widders, an' he tole 'em as how no woman ain't got a right to have two husbands when dere are some of her sisters dat ain't got none, an' he admonished 'em not to perk deir caps at de men, but to go a way back an' set down ontil all de gals has done got married."

"Humph," says I. "Dat advice listens all right, but I bet you ain't gwine to see no widder take hit."

"Whut I wants to know is how dey do hit," 'spons Sis Sairy Ann wid a groan.

"Widders is suttenly up-an'-comin' folks," says Ma'y Jane.

"Dere ain't no odder nation of people dat's got de hustle to 'em dat widders is," 'spons I. "Looks lak dere's somethin' in losin' de partner of yo' bosom dat puts pep an' ginger into you. Why, wid my own eyeballs I's done seed a woman whut's been dat puny an' sickly she ain't been able to lift her han' to cook a meal 'a' vittals, or do a day's washin' for ten yeahs, an' de minnit she got to be a widder she git dat filled wid git-up-an'-gitness dat she was able to chase down a able-bodied man, an' ketch him."

"Widders sholy is dangerous," says Ma'y Jane, "an' ef men had de sense dat Gawd promised a fishin'-worm, dey'd run ev'y time dey seed one of dem black pirate veils bearin' down on 'em."

"Shoo, chile," says I, "don't you look for gumption 'bout love in men, for ef you does, you's gwine to be disapp'inted. De Lawd didn't give men no sense 'bout women, which is a mighty lucky thing for women. Goodness knows, hit's hard enough to git a husban' as it is, an' ef men warn't as blind as bats an'

dat simple-minded dat a gal baby can fool 'em, dere wouldn't be no way of gittin' 'em to put deir necks in de matermonial halter."

"Well," 'spons Sis Sairy Ann, "whutever de secret is of throwin' dust in a man's eyes, widders knows hit, an' single women don't, an' hit's my belief dat hit's a conjer, for widders ain't no better lookin', nor no slimmer, nor no spryer, nor no better cooks dan us ole maids. Yit dey can marry all 'roun' us, an' git fo' husbands apiece, whilst de balance of us ain't got none. You needn't tell me dat hit's de widder's superior charm. Hit's de way dey wuks deir rabbit-foot. Hit's de conjer."

"Naw, Sis Sairy Ann," says I, "hit ain't de conjer. Hit's experience. De ole maid des guesses at whut a man likes, an' how to please him, but de woman whut's done been through de trials an' tribulations of matermony ain't takin' no long shots at how to git 'roun' a man, an' soft-soap him, an' rub his fur de right way. She done cut her wisdom-teeth on one husban', an' she knows whut she's 'bout.

"Matermony has done give her a pint cup by which to measure ev'y odder man dat comes her way. An' dat's whar de widder wins out.

She don't make no mistakes. Hit's de difference twixt makin' a cake by throwin' in de ingrediums, hit-or-miss, an' makin' one by a rule dat don't never fail.

"Now a young gal heah, lak Ma'y Jane, when she wants to hand out a line of talk to a man dat'll make him set up an' listen an' want to come back again, converses wid him 'bout de books she's been a-readin', an' de state of his soul, an' highfalutin things lak dat. An' de man gits de fidgets, an' most goes to sleep, an' when he shuts de front do' behin' him, hit's good night fer him.

"But bless you, honey, a widder wouldn't have nothin' to do wid foolishness lak dat. She wouldn't talk to a man 'bout his soul. She'd know from pussonal observation dat a man ain't got much soul, for he's mostly stomach, an' she'd fill him up on fried chicken, an' chicken-fixings, an' he'd be back de nex' night. Hit ain't high-browed talk dat makes a hit wid a man. Hit's fust-class cookin'.

"Anodder reason why de widder can always cut out a young gal is becaze de gal expects a man always to be a-handin' out com-

pliments to her, an' tellin' her how beautiful she is, an' whut a gran' figger she is got, an' dat she suttenly does perambulate lak a fashion-plate.

"Now de widder has done found out from matermony dat a man takes a mighty luke-warm interest in anybody but hisself, an' dat whilst he can converse 'bout hisself, an' his job, an' his autoymobile, an' his dog to de Judgment Day, an' have a puffectly gran' time doin' hit, hit don't take him long to git all tired an' frazzled out talkin' to a woman 'bout de things dat she's interested in.

"Darfore a widder kin' of waves away de flattery when a man begins to praise her, an' she des rolls up her sleeves an' gits busy handin' out de soft talk to de man, an' tellin' him 'bout how big an' handsome, an' strong, an' noble he is, an' whut a gran' job de Lawd turned out when He made him. An' dat does de trick. A gal dat is tryin' to make a hit wid a man sholy does turn out raw wuk when you compars hit wid de perfessional, polished performance of a widder.

"Den anodder reason why men prefers widders is becaze a man says to hisself dat

de widder is broke to double harness, an' dat ef he marries one, he's gwine to save hisself all de trouble of teachin' a skittish gal not to shy at ev'y bugaboo in married life, or a balky one not to git stubborn an' refuse to pull ev'y time she gits riled 'bout somethin' dat don't please her, or makin' one dat's inclined to bolt stay in de middle of de road. Yassum, a man says to hisself dat some odder man has done fit all dem matermonial fights out wid de widder, an' he won't have to have de bother of doin' hit ef he marries her, an' so dat's why he ups an' pops de question.

"An' he's right. A widder is used to puttin' up wid de cantankerousness of a husban', an' she don't expect a man to be de pin-feathered angel an' romantical hero, rolled into one, dat a young gal thinks she's gittin' when she gits married. An' a widder is a lots more peaceable wife dan a young gal is. When her husban' don't git home of an evenin' on time, she don't have de high strikes, an' whilst she may meet him wid de stove lifter in one hand an' de poker in de odder, after de family ruction is over, she'll put him to bed, an' put wet cloths on his haid in place of washin' him

way wid a flood of tears, an' de threat dat she'll go back home to her maw or go to co't an' git a divorsch.

"An' dat ends de matter, for widders is done found out dat a man can do a lot of side-steppin' an' still be a mighty good proposition to tie to. Furdermo' a widder dat marries a man don't worry an' nag him none 'bout wantin' to know whedder he loves her or not as long as he brings home his wages. An' mo' dan dat, mos' women kills off deir fust husban's learnin' to cook, an' so de man whut marries a widder saves hisself from gittin' dyspepsy. I tell you dat widders is a gran' matermonial risk, an' I don't blame no man for marryin' one."

"I don't see whut widders want to marry agin for," says Ma'y Jane. "Looks lak a woman whut's done had one husban', an' insurance money, ought to be saterfied, an' give some sister woman a chanst."

"Well," 'spons I, "I specs widders an' widowers both marry agin for de same reason, an' dat is becaze hit's kin' of lonesome not to have nobody to knock yo' faults an' quarrel wid when you has been used to dat diversion.

Hit sort of takes de spice out of doin' anything not to have nobody object to hit, nor fight wid you over hit. You misses yo' sparrin' partner, an' you can't be happy ontel you gits anodder one."

"De Good Book commands us to wipe away de tears from de widder's eyes," says my ole man Ike, whut had been a-listenin' to de confabulation.

"Well," 'spons I, "I reckon dat's 'bout de mos' dangerousest job dat any man ever ondertook, an' don't you dast try hit when I's dead an' gone."

KNOCKING YOUR IN-LAWS

De odder night I took my foot in my hand an' meandered over to see Sis Henrietta, an' we was passin' a pleasant evenin' togedder, a-scandalisin' de neighbors, when her gal, Willa, which is de short for her full name which is I-Will-Arise-An'-Go-To-My-Father, drapped in to see her Ma.

Co'se Sis Henrietta is mighty pleased to see her, an' axes her how all her folks is, an' how de chillun is gittin' along at school, an' how de baby is comin' on wid his teeth, an' den she heaves a sigh an' inquires about Ben, which am Willa's husban' an' a boss carpenter.

"I hardly dast ax about him, dough," she says, "for fear I'll hear dat he is done kilt hisself."

"De lan's sake, Ma," sclaims Willa, "what

makes you talk dat way? Why, Ben ain't got no mo' idee of committin' susancied dan you is. Dere's too many good eats left in de world for Ben to be in a hurry to go where dere ain't nothin' to set yo' tooth in, 'scusin' maybe angel food, what ain't got no subjance in hit for a hearty stomach."

"Maybe so," says Sis Henrietta, "but mark my words, Ben is a-diggin' his grave wid his teeth."

"Shoo," 'spons Willa, wid dat little fat laugh dat a woman gives when she has got de man she wants, an' des enjoys pomperin' him, "shoo, Ma, Ben will still be a-diggin' his grave when dem vegetablers, what jes' gnaws lak a rabbit on a little green truck, is been a moulderin' in dere's fo' twenty years. Anyway, I laks a man whut takes an interest in his vittels, an' des smiles all over hisself, an' tells you dat you is de yaller rose of Texas when you sets a dish of chicken fixin's befo' him.

"Furdermo', a woman whut is married to a man whut loves to eat ain't got no cause to worry about vamps, fo' she's got a way to conjer him dat never fails. After a while I'll

get ole, an' grizzle-headed, an' fat, an' if de only hold I had on Ben was my looks, maybe he'd pass me up for some slim hussy dat was young enough to be my daughter, but dere ain't nothin' gwine take away from me my gift wid de pots an' pans, an' as long as dere is a cook-stove left in de world, I's got a charm dat ain't never gwine to pall on Ben, an' I ain't nowise afraid of his leavin' me for none of dem sirens dat he knows would pisen him wid deir cookin'."

"Ben suttenly is gittin' dat baywindowed he looks lak a barrel on skids," says Sis Henrietta.

"He suits my taste," 'spons Willa, "dem Romin Ohs dat looks lak livin' skeletons, never did make no hit wid me. I admires a pussonable gennleman whut looks lak he made enough money to feed hisself, an' don't go about wid de pearance of a starved houn' dog."

"Did you buy dat beaded Georgy waist dat you was a-lookin' at de odder day?" axes Sis Henrietta.

"Nawm," says Willa, "des as I got de money done saved up for hit de twinses needed

shoes, an' I had to git little Gamaliel Hardin' Coolidge Herbert Hoover a go-cart, an' so I kinder figgered hit out dat I didn't need that Georgy waist, nohow."

"Huh," 'spons Sis Henrietta, "I ain't sayin' nothin' ag'inst Ben, whut am a good man, dough he ain't no shakes as a money maker, but ef you had had enough sense to have married Si Smith you would been diked out in beads ontel you rattled as you walked, an' lakwise had a noughtobobile, an' money to burn, instid of slavin' yo'se'f to death for a husban', an' a passel of chillun, an' bein' a nickel nusser."

"I's saterfied wid Ben. He was my pick, an' I still laks my taste," 'spons Willa, an' den she says she must be gwine along home, an' she kisses her Ma good-bye, but I done took notice dat whilst she comes in laughin' an' gay, she goes out kinder low in her min', an' lak somethin' is bitter in her mouth, an' dat all of de pep is done gone out of her.

Pretty soon here comes 'long Sis Henrietta's son Jeems, an' she axes him how dey is all gittin' along, an' he says fine, an' she says she

suttenly is s'prised to hear hit, becaze de way his wife, Sally, gads about hit looks lak she'd be wo' to a plumb frazzle. And den she 'low dat a woman's place is de home, an' she had oughter stay in hit, instid of traipsin' 'roun' to de movies an' bargain sales.

"A man oughter boss his wife," says Sis Henrietta, "an' Sally is dat high sperited dat she'll henpeck you if you don't watch out."

"I never noticed hit befo'," 'spons Jeems, "but now dat you calls my attention to hit I misdoubts dat Sally don't ax my advice as much as she had oughter, bein' as how I am de haid of de house."

"Young women dese days is mighty flighty and deir husbands should keep an eye on 'em," goes on Sis Henrietta. "I ain't hintin' nothin' bad on Sally's character, but huccome I see her stop an' speak to dat triflin' Sim Reeves dat ev'ybody knows was crazy to marry her, an' dat you cut out? Furdermo', hit looks lak dat she is a-wastin' yo' money a-buyin' dese heah high-water skirts, an' sportin' hats, instid of wearin' her ole clothes, an' I mo' dan s'picions dat she don't peel her potato parin's as thin as she had oughter."

"Why, Ma," sclaims Jeems, "you s'prises me! I thought dat Sally was a master manager, becaze we's a-savin' money, an' I give her credit for bein' sort of a miracle worker dat made a mighty big show on mighty little money. But, co'se, a man don't know about dese things lak a woman does, an' if you says dat Sally is a traipsin' aroun' too much, an' a wastin' my hard-earned money, I suttenly is gwine to put de crimps on her spendin' an' lay down de law to her."

An' wid dat Jeems grabbed his hat an' lit out for home to have a row wid Sally, an' after he had gone I said, des as sweet as pie:

"Well, Sis Henrietta, ma'am, you suttenly is got yo' wuk cut out for you."

"What wuk?" she axes.

"Takin' keer of Willa's and Jeems's chillen after deir Ma an' Pa gits deir divorsches," I 'spons.

"Divorsches," cries Sis Henrietta, "why, Sis Mirandy, you knows dat I is de President of de Anti-Divorsch League, an' mo'over, I is a Christian woman whut believes dat de holy estate is holy, an' dat dem whut enters into hit is bound to stay dere for better or wusser."

"Why, I thought dat you was boostin' for Reno," sclaims I, "an' dat you was tryin' to egg on yo' chillen to de divorsch court, for I done set here an' see you rub ev'y bit of de gilt off de gingerbread of matermony for Willa an' Jeems, an' show 'em how dey done got tooken in, an' sold a gold brick when dey got married, an' ef you is ever found anythin' dat will make a pusson sicker of de holy estate dan dat, you is out travelled me."

"I lay I can say whut I please to my own son an' daughter about deir wife an' husban'," says Sis Henrietta in a huff.

"Dat you can't," I 'spons, "onless you is honin' to bust up a home. I ain't sayin' dat matermony ain't lak buyin' a pig in a poke, for hit is, but when folks is done got deir bargain and took hit home, whut is de good of p'intin' out all de defects in hit, an' makin' 'em dissatisfied wid hit?

"An' dat is where mothers git in deir deadly wuk. I's a-givin' you de true word, Sis Henrietta, when I says dat de fust time dat mos' men ever finds out deir wives is extravagant, an' lazy, an' gads too much, is when deir Ma calls deir attentions to de fact, an' dat de fust

s'picion dat mos' brides have of deir husbands is when deir Mas begins tellin' 'em dat hit's mighty curis dat deir husbands gits home so late at night from wuk."

"I reckon you is right, Sis Mirandy," 'spons Sis Henrietta.

"I know I is," I says. "Co'se I know dat knockin' a in-law is de favorite indoor sport of women wid married chillen, but de safe time to play hit is befo' de weddin'. Use de hammer all you lak den on de ones yo' chillen is gwine to tie up wid, but after dey is got 'em for keeps, git busy wid de salve spreader, an' make yo' son and daughter think dey is done got de paregorics of de whole lot of husbands and wives."

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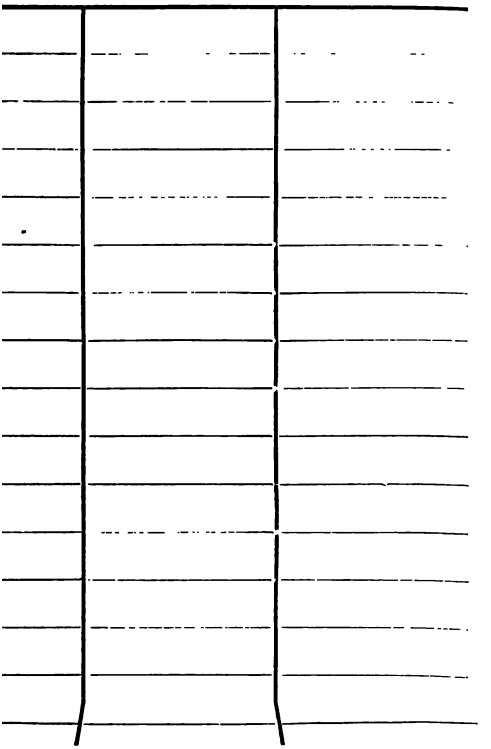
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